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THE ADVENTURES

OF

A MAN OF FAMILY.

VOL. III.

THE ADVENTURES

OF

A MAN OF FAMILY.

BY

LORD WILLIAM PITT LENNOX,

AUTHOR OF

FIFTY YEARS' BIOGRAPHICAL REMINISCENCES.'

"Ficta voluptatis causâ sint proxima veris."

HORACE.

"Fictions to please should wear the face of truth."

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ac

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1864.

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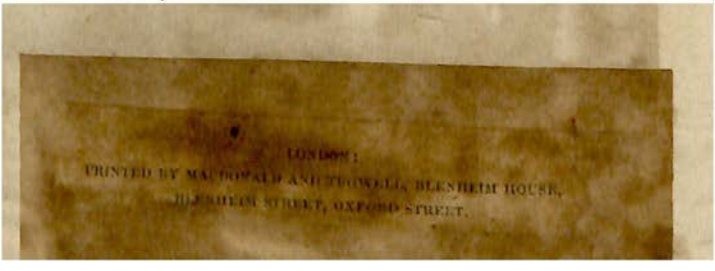
LONDON:
PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TROWSELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE,
BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.

THE ADVENTURES

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A MAN OF FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

"*She* never shall find out fit mate, but such
As some misfortune brings *her*, or mistake;
Or whom *she* wishes most shall seldom gain,
Through his perverseness, but shall see him gained
By a far worse."

MILTON.

"MONSIEUR says he will not descend for dinner," said the waiter to Mrs. Middleton, on his return from the apartment of the "Anglais mysterieux," as the waiter employed in the hotel had already denominated him. "He does seem *un petit peu agité*," continued the man, raising his

finger towards his own head, by way of explaining the locality he supposed was affected in the gentleman in question.

"Mamma! mamma! you must go and see Mr. Carlton yourself," said the philanthropic young lady to her mother. "I am sure he is far from well, and there will be no harm in your going to him, because I introduced him to you two years ago on the top of the Rigi—you must remember."

"Well, but, my dear," observed Mrs. Middleton, after a moment's reflection, "I am not so sure that even an introduction on so well-known a spot warrants a lady's entering a gentleman's room after an interval of two years, simply because he is not quite well."

"Oh! mamma," replied her daughter, "you always are so fanciful about the propriety of this or that. How could you suppose that I would wish you to do anything that was not correct? We shall be late for dinner, and get no places."

All this time of course the waiter was remaining, playing with the door handle, anxious to see

how the question would arrange itself; but he was suddenly informed that his further services were not required.

"You must just go to Mr. Carlton's apartment, and say we hope he will escort us to the *salle à manger*," continued Miss to her mother.

"Well, I don't quite like it," said Mrs. Middleton; "but if you particularly wish me to go, I suppose I must."

She knew very well that it was of no use arguing with her daughter, so muttering her disinclination, she walked across the landing-place, and knocked at the door through which she had seen the gentleman shown on his arrival a few hours before.

"Entrez!" was the invitation that was given her from within. "Entrez" in the loud key which foreign waiters have so little difficulty in recognising as coming from English lungs, and which is so different in tone and accent from the same word as pronounced by other people.

The Englishman is generally rather proud of

his "entrez," and blunders it out in a bold, defiant, menacing style, as if there was no humbug about it, seemingly forewarning the intruder that he had better take care what he is about when he *does* gain admittance.

Mrs. Middleton was rather taken aback by the word-of-command manner in which she was told to enter, and it required a second mandate before she summoned up resolution to obey.

"How do you do, Mr. Carlton?" she began, as soon as she was fairly inside the door, and in view of the tenant of the room, "I think I have the pleasure of——"

He was pacing up and down the room as the door opened, speaking to himself in a manner that made the intruder feel rather uncomfortable.

"Oh! Mr. Carlton," cried Mrs. Middleton, drawing back in alarm, "for Heaven's sake, be calm——"

"Now, look here," said he, defiantly, interrupting her. "You cannot deceive me. I know you —you are an English detective, in disguise. I

am disposed to be tractable, but to be captured by so unworthy a stratagem is too humiliating. I am a desperate character, armed to the teeth, and this device is only adopted for your own safety. I repeat," he cried, in what appeared to the lady a terribly threatening manner, "that, though I could defy you, and could easily make my escape through this window" (pointing to a large open one close to where he was standing) "still I give you my word I will not attempt it, if you will at once change your dress."

Poor Mrs. Middleton, in the direst fright and mystification, still had sufficient presence of mind to avail herself of the opportunity of retiring, and slid out with singular celerity.

"Oh!" she exclaimed to her daughter, in the most frightened strain, on regaining her apartment, "you know not what you have brought upon me! I have been terrified out of my life. Give me some salts immediately, or I shall faint on the spot!"

Miss Middleton did as she was asked.

"Goodness gracious, mamma!" she cried, "what can be the matter? I suppose you found Mr. Carlton a little strange?"

"A little strange!" repeated the irritated mother, in a mingled tone of reproach and satire. "I wish you had but seen him, and judged for yourself. He is downright stark, raving mad. Yes, mad! mad! mad!"

Then came the recollection of the injunction that had been given her with respect to a change of raiment.

"Oh! if you only knew, too, how I was insulted—what a long five-minutes'-worth of abuse I went through! Oh! my dear, I never before was so dreadfully ill-used!"

"Explain yourself, mamma," replied the young lady. "What *did* happen, then?"

The poor lady tried to explain, but, to her amiable daughter's ears, the explanation was inexplicable; her report of the strange scene seemed so wildly improbable.

"No sooner had I entered the room, than he

flew at me as if I was a parcel of carrion, and told me he would not follow me till I had put on" (here the remembrance of the insulting words she had been compelled to listen to, seemed almost to choke her)—"he then insisted on my departure in such a way that—that .... all your poor mother can say is that .... she was *not* kicked out of the room!"

"Oh! mamma," exclaimed Miss Middleton, "how very, very shocking! I wish I had only gone myself. I am so very sorry for you, who are always so kind and amiable. Perhaps, however, you are labouring under a mistake as to Mr. Carlton's behaviour towards you—perhaps it was only his manner, and he didn't really mean anything, after all. He is strange, though, decidedly strange, of that I am convinced; but if he will not come down to dinner with us, perhaps we had better venture down alone. It won't be the first time that we have done so."

"Oh! I could certainly eat no dinner if *he* were sitting anywhere near me," interrupted Mrs.

Middleton, "of that I feel certain. Let us, then, go down, my dear, if it is not too late."

Miss Middleton judged that it was not too late; and having surveyed her mother, just to assure herself that there was little chance of her carrying her fainting threat into execution, she led the way downstairs to the dining room.

I pass over the period allotted to the meal, because it went off without any incident of importance. Everybody seemed to have quite enough to do to get hold of sufficient of the small portions of passing "plats," without occupying the time in conversing with his or her neighbour; and all seemed to prefer getting all they could for their three francs. The beef, the veal, the fowl, followed each other in quick succession, and were handed round to the company, most of whom were hungry Frenchmen, who received their nourishment at so much a month, in harmlessly small helps, each about the size of a penny stamp box; while the master of the hôtel sat at the top of the table, like a sort of boarder

chief, and performed his daily task of reducing the several dishes into as many component parts as a child's puzzle.

I only mention incidentally that Miss Middleton, when dinner was over, in spite of the work she had already done, took her mother out to the Opera Comique, where "Marion Lescaut" was acted.

While other fair and sensitive ladies were transferring their sorrowful tears from their eyes to their handkerchiefs, and showing their feelings for the poor young man, who went through so many hardships of love and trials of affection for his poor *Marion's* sake, by sobs and sighs of the most audible description, she, on the contrary, was hard-hearted and matter-of-fact enough to be quite angry with him for making such a fool of himself, wondering how he could have been so lavish of sentimental passion for such "a creature," as she regarded the heroine of the piece, and contemplating the display of tender emotion in a questionable cause, amongst the audience, as one of the curiosities of human nature, rarely to be met with

in any other place but in the boxes, balcony, and stalls, of a French theatre.

On their return to the Hôtel de Lille et Albion, they were informed by the waiter that he had been under the necessity of sending for medical assistance. For the "Anglais mysterieux" had been so "agité," and had been under the delusion that all the domestics who attended him were police agents in plain clothes come to arrest him, and that he had so terrified the "bonne" that she had declared the gentleman was quite "derangé," and moreover she had determined that, unless he were taken to a maison de santé immediately, she would leave the house at once.

Two French doctors, he added, had been to see him, and pronounced him very ill, and that monsieur had behaved quite well in their presence, and offered to go away with them because they were properly dressed; but still they thought him "bien malade" all the same, and had given orders that he should be kept very quiet, as he was in a critical state.

The next morning, Miss Middleton, meeting the two doctors as they were leaving the invalid's room, compelled them to halt, and give her all the particulars regarding their patient, adding, that he was a young man in whom she took some interest, and therefore was anxious to know how he was.

"Ah, mademoiselle," replied one, who understood English pretty well, "it was to you probably that the 'Monsieur Anglais' was alluding in a state of delirium this morning. N'est ce pas, Monsieur Ricardi," said he, addressing his colleague.

"Oui, certainement," was his ready answer.

Monsieur Ricardi was only an indoor servant, employed by Monsieur Framboise, the real doctor, to let patients in and out when they came for consultations, to look after the leeches, and clean the medicine-bottles and the shoes, and make himself generally useful. In such vocation, he was nothing more than plain "Pierre;" but when Monsieur Framboise was sent for in a hurry on the English service, he generally made him put on one

of his own cast-off professional coats, and follow him as a second doctor—which apparent accession of medical strength, he said, gave "confiance aux Anglais," and by this means he got double fees for every visit.

"Oui, oui," said Monsieur Framboise, "le jeune homme must have been talking of you to himself when we went into his room this morning."

"What was he saying?" demanded Miss Middleton, with evident curiosity.

"Oh, he said, 'if *she* were only with me, I could endure all—*she* whom I love so much, and whom perhaps I shall see no more!'"

"And how did you find him in health?" continued the young lady, looking extremely satisfied with the information just received; but her anxiety about the invalid rather increased than otherwise.

"Oh, I hope that we shall soon put him to rights again," replied the doctor; "he seems to be suffering from 'délire,' and to have a great deal of fever —but all that will pass with a little care and atten-

tiôn on our part—don't you think so, Monsieur Ricardi?"

"Oui, certainement," said Monsieur Ricardi, as promptly as possible.

"And when do you think my mother will be able to see him herself?" inquired the lady again.

"Oh, I think he had better remain quiet for a few days. We have given him some calming medicine to make him sleep, and cause him to be less excited; and I think you had better wait and see me again before Madame, votre mére, ventures to visit him—don't you think so, Monsieur Ricardi?"

"Oui, certainement," was the confirmatory opinion of the personage appealed to.

"I suppose, Mademoiselle, there is no chance of your leaving the hotel?" continued Doctor Framboise, "till the crisis is over with the patient, as he might wish to hear of you, or even see you."

"Oh, no; I don't think mamma would like to leave till he is quite recovered," replied the young lady.

This was just the sort of answer that Doctor Framboise hoped to elicit, as he always had an eye to the main chance, namely, the payment of his bill; and he thought that, if the patient should die, he might be left completely in the lurch as to his money, whereas now he trusted to be able, in case of his patient's case proving fatal, to establish a sort of claim on these ladies.

Giving mademoiselle the most gracious of professional salutes, and putting the question to Monsieur Ricardi, as to whether their presence was not required elsewhere, and having received from him the regular "oui, certainement," this real and pretended disciple of Esculapius made their way downstairs. A very few minutes after, the latter of the twain having relapsed into the character of unassuming Pierre, was busily engaged in cleaning the shoes of his master and family in the most uncomfortable and undesirable domestic cell that shoe-black ever entered, while the coat of office was carefully folded up and put by till the next visit to the Englishman was appointed to

take place, or any other occasion of the kind presented itself.

Every morning, after the two medical (?) men had paid their visit, they were intercepted by Miss Middleton, who was most untiring in her inquiry as to Mr. Carlton's state of health; and every morning Doctor Framboise kept down the excitement, and encouraged her perseverance, either by repeating something which had fallen from the sick man's lips, showing that his thoughts, "wandering," as they were in many respects, were apparently constant to some female or another, which female, mademoiselle evidently believed to be herself; or else he did what had the same effect upon her, namely, he invented something flattering, and as Monsieur Ricardi was always there to verify anything he said, of course she had very little doubt as to the genuineness of what was told her.

Every day she desired to know whether her mamma might go and pay her respects to Mr. Carlton. For many days the two wise men judged that it would be imprudent to give the permission

required, but after about a fortnight the fever was judged to have sufficiently abated, and the patient to be improved enough to admit of a visit from Madame Middleton. Immediately on receiving the glad intelligence from the doctors, the impatient young lady rushed away to her mother.

"Oh! mamma! mamma!" she exclaimed, "you have got permission from the doctors to go and visit Mr. Carlton!"

"Got permission to visit Mr. Carlton!" replied Mrs. Middleton, letting fall her work as she spoke; "why, I never applied for it, and it's the very last thing I should ask for."

"Ah! but it would be only kind and charitable, you know," continued her daughter, "to do so, because we have been neighbours in the hotel for so long, and the doctors say he is so very much better; and then you know, mamma, he is a very great friend of mine, and you will be doing me an inestimable favour, which I am sure you would not like to refuse."

"Well, but, my dear," objected the parent, "you quite forget that I should be transgressing the rules of propriety in entering the room of a gentleman whom I know so slightly as Mr. Carlton; and though you know, my dear, my eyes have grown dim with age, still the verdict of scandal would hardly pronounce my eyesight to be sufficiently bad to admit of my walking with my undamageable reputation into the presence of an all but convalescent gentleman."

"Oh! mamma," replied the other, "you are so fussy about what is proper and right, and yet I am quite sure that no book about behaviour or good manners has ever laid down any laws of convention respecting the case of invalids."

"My dear," said Mrs. Middleton, "how very strange it is, to be sure, you can't see things as they should be seen; but then you young, giddy, thoughtless girls of three-and-thirty haven't had the experience of a long life, as I have. I am sure it would be improper for me to enter Mr. Carlton's room."

"My dear mamma," said mademoiselle, "you don't know how anxious I am to hear from you your opinion of Mr. Carlton's health; and it is really very important to me, because I have reason to believe that even when his mind has been wandering he has not been entirely forgetful of—me. If you will only go this once, in spite of your scruples, I will promise to let you off walking in the Champs Elysée for two days."

"No, will you really?" exclaimed her mother, suddenly interrupting her. "In that case I will go and see him, if you will only not insist on my doing so more than this once."

"How very kind of you!" said Miss Middleton. "I will promise not to ask you to go a second time."

So Mrs. Middleton rose from her chair, and being escorted by her daughter to Mr. Carlton's door, lest she should change her mind, and her heart should fail her half way, she gave a modest knock, and was admitted.

"I have come to see if you are recovering from

your severe illness, Mr. Carlton, and to ask you if there is anything I can do for you?" said the old lady, trembling from head to foot, lest Mr. Carlton, should be, as she had anticipated, enveloped in a dressing-gown.

"What can you hope to be able to do for me?" replied Mr. Carlton, with a wild surprised stare, "when the only wish I have in the world is to see *her* whom I fear that I never shall see. Alas! alas! could I but know how she is, and if she has ceased to think of me!"

Mrs. Middleton was most agreeably surprised to find him so much more peaceable than he was the last time she had the pleasure of seeing him, and most good-naturedly answered him at once.

"Oh! she has not ceased to think of you—I can assure you she thinks of you as much as ever she did."

"Really!" replied Mr. Carlton, suddenly recovering from the state of lethargy in which he seemed to be when Mrs. Middleton entered. "Really! really!" he repeated, in a most excited

and frantic manner. "Can you really give me any tidings respecting her whom I love so sincerely?"

"I have only just left her," said the old lady.

"Only just left her?—is it possible?" demanded the invalid, suddenly rising from his chair, and rushing forward towards Mrs. Middleton, as if he was going to embrace her.

Mrs. Middleton uttered a violent scream and hastened towards the door.

"Oh! stay! stay!" he implored her, in a beseeching strain; "fear me not, I would not harm you. I entreat you, by all that's sacred, tell me all you know. Have you really seen her? Can you give me hopes that I shall ever again behold her?"

"Oh! yes, I can give you every hope, if you will only wait a few days, and be less excited," exclaimed Mrs. Middleton.

"Why not now—at once—this very moment?" cried Mr. Carlton, already commencing to loosen

his dressing-gown strings, with a view of adopting a coat.

"Oh, no! not to-day, not to-day!" said Mrs. Middleton, who now seemed to have him entirely under her control. "She is here in the hotel—in fact, it was at her .... desire that I came to see you; but if you would like to write a few lines, I will undertake to convey them to her."

He rushed to the writing-table, and every now and then turning round to assure himself that the good "medium" had not vanished, was lost to every other worldly consideration in the concoction of the following epistle:—

"DEAREST, MOST PRECIOUS CLARA,—To me you are dearer now even than you were when I had the satisfaction of saving your graceful form from the remorseless waves. Oh! Clara! Clara! I feel at this moment completely thine. There is a dear old creature waiting to convey this note to you. May Heaven bless you, and preserve you a few days longer, and then I hope I shall have the

felicity to see you. I trust Mr. Hindley is quite well.

"Adieu, dearest Clara!

"And believe me ever sincere to you,

"GEORGE CARLTON."

Hastily folding up the communication, he put it into the old lady's hand, without any address, and begged her to deliver it immediately to her for whom it was intended, which she consented to do; and having also promised to come again, and bring tidings of *her* to him, she withdrew.

Miss Middleton, as was perfectly natural, was waiting outside the door to receive her messenger. When she heard that her mother was the bearer of a letter from Mr. Carlton to herself, her excitement was uncontrollable. She snatched at the epistle, and at once commenced devouring its contents.

"Dearest, most precious Clara!" she read aloud —"saving your graceful form from the remorseless waves!" then, "Clara, Clara, I feel completely

thine!" "The good old creature waiting to convey the note to you!" "Dearest Clara!"

"The monster!" she suddenly exclaimed, "this letter is meant for someone else," and she threw it indignantly upon the floor. "To think that I have been wasting not only my affections but also my time and my mother's services upon such a man! Oh, this is awful! A whole fortnight on the Continent thrown away, when we might have been by this time in Norway, in Greece, in Palestine, or some such classical quarter! Mamma," she added, turning, and addressing herself to her astonished and bewildered parent, "we must pack up!"

"Well, my dear, you know you always superintend the plan of our tour, and if we must go, we must," said Mrs. Middleton, looking little prepared to undertake the flight evidently required of her.

"Yes, we won't stay another hour here!" cried the young lady, excitedly.

So saying, she rushed to the bell, and directed

the waiter, when he arrived to answer it, to bring the bill up instantly, and order a voiture de remise in half an hour.

"Ah, vous allez partir!" exclaimed the waiter, lingering in the door-way as if he was not going to do anything till his curiosity was satisfied.

"Oui, nous allons à Cairo," she replied, with decision.

"Bien!" returned the waiter, and immediately set off to do as he was bid, wondering how on earth "les Anglais" could be so "bêtes" as to leave such a charming place as Paris in order to seek such a distant spot as Cairo. "Vraiment ils ont une passion effrayante pour le voyage, ces Anglais!" he meditated, as he made his way downstairs.

Half an hour after, true to her determination, Miss Middleton had got everything ready for a start, and having been lucky enough to obtain places in the interior of the diligence, she and her tractable mother took care to get comfortably into them before the hurry-scurry of the last moment arrived.

Poor Mrs. Middleton looked more dead than alive as she tumbled into the vehicle with a four-and-twenty hours journey before her ere she could hope for any rest, lamenting, in her own mind, how dreadfully she had been cheated out of the promised two days' immunity from walking duty, on the strength of which she had acceded to her daughter's request, and visited Mr. Carlton.

But it is too late to indulge in vain regrets, for the four "Normans" are being already "put to," and the conductor, though he *is* a good-natured man, would not think of allowing ladies to get out now, for he is already running round the vehicle, and telling dilatory-looking passengers that they are going to start "tout de suite!"—"tout de suite!"—It's true he has been saying so for twenty minutes at least, but that's all in the way of business.

I wish Mrs. and Miss Middleton an extremely pleasant journey, and lots of success; and trust that on the banks of that wonderful river de-

scribed by Herodotus, the younger lady may forget the fruitless fortnight she frittered away at the Hôtel de Lille et Albion, in Paris.

CHAPTER II.

"Thy beauty, whilst it thrills my soul,
Cannot dispel its gloom;
But beams with a deceptive light,
Like roses on a tomb."

Sicilian Bride.

When a man is deserted by his friends, especially when they happen to be ladies, it is high time for him to begin to act for himself. If he be laid up in a sick room, unable to go out, and with nobody to nurse him, it is imperative that he should think about getting well; and if he wishes that a record should be kept of his sufferings, and there is no one kind enough to make it for him, it is quite as necessary that he should set about it himself.

This was exactly the case of the hero of the story that so thoroughly claims the indulgence of the reader. I was totally unfit to describe the history of my life from the moment that I left the shores of England to the departure of Mrs. Middleton and her daughter from Paris; yet, when I returned to consciousness, and set to work to establish a link between the past and the present, what appeared at first particularly misty, gradually cleared up.

It was a considerable time after the precipitate flight of my anxious compatriots, that I was able to call myself thoroughly recovered, and the doctor and his pseudo-medical friend allowed me to escape from their hands. One morning they entered my room, and found me in a half-dozing state, from which I was very loth to be roused. Thinking that I was fast asleep, Monsieur Framboise, after walking two or three times towards the window and back again, resolving in his own mind whether he should wake me up completely, suddenly turned round to his colleague.

"Pierre," he said, "have you cleaned out the bureau this morning?"

Pierre replied that he had not.

"You lazy scoundrel!" exclaimed his master; "you have had nothing to do but black the shoes, and that you have done very badly. Mind—the bureau must be cleaned, directly we return."

I was not so fast asleep as to prevent my hearing every word of what he said.

As soon as he judged me capable of understanding sublunary matters, he presented me with his bill. I had a tolerably large sum about me when I left England, so I paid the bill, exorbitant though it was; and, as soon as I had done so, bade the doctor to discontinue his visits, as I was now only very weak, and I had more confidence in my own constitution than in French pharmacy.

The sad reality of my melancholy position now manifested itself to me most unmistakeably. When I came abroad I was so thoroughly borne down by feelings of remorse and anguish, the bitter consequences of the deplorable act I had

committed, that I was, at first, overwhelmed with the pangs of self-reproach. Now and then, for brief and unsatisfactory intervals, I would wake to consciousness, and imagine that I had shaken off the trance, in which my mind had lain so long, but, just as I believed that I was thoroughly freed from its influence, my imagination would again become confused and distracted.

In spite of my indifference regarding much of my past life, the awful fact that I had taken the life of a fellow-creature never ceased to haunt me in some form or another, and I was always conscious of the helplessness of my position, and of the feeling that I was isolated in the world.

As my strength, which had been most materially reduced by fever, gradually returned, so my mind began to grow proportionably stronger, and I became, by degrees, more reconciled and habituated to regard with more composure that which could not now be undone, and resolved to make an effort to meet the consequences.

After a time I became well enough to leave my

room, and breathe once more the open air, but at every step I took I found that I had fresh trials to undergo. It seemed to me as if everyone who looked at me knew what I had done, and turned away, as if the mark of a murderer was branded on my brow. I felt that I was a miserable outcast wandering on the face of the earth, and I chose the most unfrequented walks that I could find. Unfortunately I was in the midst of a gay and noisy town. I was, as yet, too unsettled and undecided as to the future to form any definite plan as to where I should go, and still too feeble to think of seeking any distant place of retirement.

I liked to drive out beyond the barrier, when I would dismiss the vehicle and take a solitary ramble in the Bois de Boulogne, which was not then ornamented, as it is now, with artificial lakes, adorned with monster rocks, transported, like obelisks, from their native home, and picturesque châlets—the whole scene resembling some pantomime representation of Fairyland more than anything else, waved into existence, as it seems

to have been, by a shake of the Imperial wand. Neither was it yet laid out, as it now is, as an extensive pleasure-ground, for beauty and fashion to air itself in.

The Bois de Boulogne was a magnificent wood, which art and the landscape-gardener had not yet reconstructed. Its trees and underwood were allowed to mat together in any sort of way that pleased them. Wild-flowers and weeds were permitted to flourish in unrestrained luxuriance. The merry grisette walked about, undisturbed, on the arm of her favourite and favoured "blouse."

Here affairs of honour were settled every day by the dozen, seldom with more damage done to the vanquished combatant than a scratched face, the loss of an ear, or a sabre-pierced arm; and here, too, the cunning thief and the daring assassin crouched in their secret lair, defying the police. Now the great caravan of the Parisian aristocratic world slowly drags its length round and round a portion of that beautiful wood every afternoon, and feminine works of art, with lovely toilettes,

vieing with the beauty they adorn, in fashionable-looking barouches, drawn by fashionable-looking horses, driven by fashionable-looking coachmen, figure there every day for an hour or two, preparatory to figuring, somewhat later, at the ballet, whilst young France of the other sex of course, must be there to look at them, and be looked at himself.

In solemn contrast, rolled the family-coach of some member of the *ancienne noblesse*, probably containing a couple of Egyptian mummy-looking matrons.

How many more component parts of the great caravan might one not describe!

It was on my return one day from one of my customary walks in the old Bois de Boulogne, when it was only a simple unadorned bit of suburban country, as I entered the hotel, which I still lived in, to avoid the trouble attendant upon the operation of changing my domicile, I was informed by the waiter that there was a letter for me in my sitting-room.

Who on earth, I thought, as I mounted the

stairs, could possibly have written to me? I had only received one letter since I came abroad, but that was from my banker, to whom I had applied for circular notes, and I could not imagine how anybody could have found out my address.

I entered my room. There was the letter lying upon the table. It was edged with the deepest black, and I immediately recognised the handwriting to be that of Mr. Rivers. I broke open the seal, prepared for some sad intelligence. I read as follows:—

"Dear George,

"It appears that almost immediately on receiving the communication you addressed to my daughter, from Dover, she started abroad, with a view of joining you, for she wrote a line to her mother to say that such was her determination. For some weeks we heard nothing whatever of her, but imagining that she was with you, and that for prudential reasons she had delayed writing to us, we were not so uneasy as we otherwise should have been.

"A few days ago, you may judge of my grief when the enclosed letter reached me from a French priest, for whom, it seems, my poor child sent at the last moment. The postmark is too illegible for me to decipher, and there is no address, consequently I am in painful ignorance as to where the melancholy event occurred, the intelligence of which has been a most severe shock to us. Having succeeded in obtaining your address from your banker, I implore you to write as soon as you receive this, to have mercy upon a fond parent's feelings, and give all particulars that you can obtain concerning our poor dear child.

"For mercy's sake, if the news that has reached us is untrue, relieve our suspense immediately. You will, I trust, be able to tell us something certain. I cannot say how I have suffered, and still am suffering for the heavy loss it has pleased God that we should sustain. Write at once. My wife is inconsolable.

"I am yours very sincerely,

"CHARLES RIVERS."

I unfolded and read the enclosed. But, alas! the first letter had been too explicit to permit me to doubt what had taken place. The other communication was in French, and the following is a literal translation :—

"My dear Mr. Rivers,

"I was last night called into our principal hotel to see, at her own request, an English lady, named Emily Carlton, who was dying. She had caught a severe illness, from which she never rallied. I have to inform you that I was present as she breathed her last. Before her death, she begged me to write to you, and in her name wish you and her mother good-bye; also she wished it to be understood that she forgave her husband, who had always treated her with kindness and affection, till that fatal morning when he suspected her unjustly.

"It was heartrending to hear the lady calling you and her dear mother by name at the last moment, when the death struggle was upon her,

supplicating you to come to her assistance. There were some things which fell from the lady's lips that I could not comprehend, but the last words she uttered, ere her spirit was taken from her, were these, 'Dear George, I forgive you.' The lady has been interred in our cemetery.

"I am, &c.,

"LE CURÉ DU VILLAGE."

For some hours after reading this second letter, my feelings were of the most painful character. Tears at last came to my relief. My poor, good, amiable, meek, affectionate Emily, alas! was no more, and I felt that I had never appreciated her half so much as she deserved.

"Oh! Emily!" I exclaimed to myself, "would I could have been present at your bedside when you desired that your forgiveness should be conveyed to me. Would that the opportunity had been granted me of asking what you were so willing to grant, and that I could have made you hear my expressions of sincere and heartfelt sorrow!"

On examining the envelope, I could not form the remotest conception as to what was the post-mark. The circular lines, which ought to have contained the name of the town at which it was posted, were all but effaced, and there was barely the twentieth part of a letter remaining to guide one in deciphering a name.

I shuddered as I endeavoured to realise what must have been my poor dear wife's feelings, her wretchedness, privation of death-bed comforts and attention. Ill-fated Emily, could I reasonably hope that she had anyone to encourage and cheer her in her desolation? She, it appeared, had been compelled to send for one of a different religious persuasion, to whom to entrust her last wishes. I could not but reproach myself for having been the cause of her death! For my sake she had undertaken a journey, with the intention of comforting me. I, perhaps, being no great distance from her—certainly, as it now appeared, in the same land, though that land was a foreign one!

My sorrow was deep and sincere. Indeed, the

hardest heart could not but have been melted under the circumstances, and the most unimpressionable nature could not but have been moved. How great must be the affliction of her loving parents! How little did her father think that he should see his only daughter no more, when he gave her away at the foot of the altar! And when he blessed her again and again, as he took leave of her, how little did he suppose that his benedictions were the last words that he should ever say to her! How should I ever dare to meet him and her mother face to face!

Yet I must perform the melancholy task of writing to tell him that I knew nothing—nothing concerning her; that his letter to me was the only intimation I had had of her death. I felt that, in spite of my grief, it was my duty to state this at once. I therefore wrote, as soon as ever I could sufficiently command my feelings, and told him the sad truth. My letter was a long one, nevertheless. My heart was full to overflowing, and wanted to unburthen itself. Once upon the

subject of my sorrow, it seemed as if I could not quit it. It gave me a melancholy pleasure to extol her in whom, during the short time that our marriage lasted, I had seen all her faults, but nothing of her good qualities. Now I saw her before me, clothed with every ideal perfection. Not till the prize was snatched from me was I aware of its worth; not till it was irrecoverable, did I regret having set so little value on it, whilst it was mine.

The past afforded me a fearful retrospect. The misery of the present was almost more than I could bear, and there was not the slightest indication of happiness or calmness of mind in the horizon of the future.

For what had my life been spared? for what had I now to live? were the desponding questions I put to myself, after several hours reflection. One thing I resolved at once to do, and this I communicated to Mr. Rivers. I determined that I would leave no stone unturned to discover where Emily had died. It might be a work but of a few days, and it might take years and years to effect.

In either case I determined that no power on earth should tempt me to relax my efforts before I had made the desired disclosures. I resolved that no hardships, or difficulties by the way, should deter me from my purpose of making a pilgrimage to her grave, and pouring out my contrition of heart over her tomb.

Having formed this plan, I made up my mind to start on my sorrowful pilgrimage the next morning. I was still far from well, but I would not consider the state of my health.

The arrival of a letter from my friend in that miserable duel, afforded me, at this time, more consolation than I can express, for it informed me that, though my late opponent's life was at first despaired of—so serious was the wound he had received—hopes were now entertained that he might be saved. He still remained, however, in so very critical a state, that it was impossible to say that an unfavourable change might not occur.

On this slender thread I clung, hoping and fearing, as I became sanguine or depressed; but as it

was long before I got any reliable intelligence, I was often a prey to the most gloomy forebodings.

CHAPTER III.

"Away! nor let me loiter in my song,
For we have many a mountain-path to tread,
And many a varied shore to sail along,
By pensive Sadness, not by Fiction, led!"

Childe Harold.

As I was perfectly justified in supposing that the tract of land that lay between Paris and the sea-coast towns, usually patronised by English people crossing the channel, was that where I should be most likely to learn the particulars I so longed for respecting my wife, I left Paris with the determination of prosecuting my researches in that direction before I attempted any other.

It was still the bright time of year, or, in my delicate state of health, I fear that I should have

been unequal to the task I had set myself. I first arrived in Paris in the middle of June. Six long weeks had elapsed since that time, during a great part of which, not only had my mind been greatly disturbed, but my life had been in the most imminent danger. It was a wonder I recovered under the medical treatment I had received. Doctor Framboise, as I discovered, was nothing more than a quack. It was now August, during which month the admirers of solar heat can enjoy it to their heart's content in Paris, or anywhere else in the interior of France.

Having left England in a hurry, I had very little baggage with me, so that my departure from Paris necessitated no difficulty in packing. As I intended to stop and make every inquiry at all the towns and villages I considered sufficiently important, I journeyed along between Paris and Calais —which was the route I meant to take first.—I hired a travelling-carriage and pair, of a voiturier, to whom I was directed by the hotel-keeper of the "Lille et Albion."

He was a curious, short, stumpy man, so broad that, when he entered the room to arrange with me about the hire of his carriage and horses, he could only come in sideways through the doorway. I had never seen a man of such extraordinary dimensions, and should not be at all surprised if I should "ne'er see his like again."

He prided himself on his prodigious and peculiar breadth; he was quite conceited about it, and delighted to boast that he had never been able to find a waistcoat sufficiently roomy for him at any ready-made clothes-shop in Paris, or any other large town in France. He was a bold Norman by birth, and, on my asking him his name, he told me it was "André le Normand," which was his familiar title, and the only one, he informed me, that he was known by.

Perhaps the reader may be astonished that I take the trouble to describe this man, who, after all, was only a coachman; but then he was a sort of wonder among that class of men; moreover, I was about to hire him for no everyday driving-tour, and in

all probability he was about to be with me for some long time—therefore he must figure prominently in this narrative.

He was of a ruddy countenance, possessed a good temper, and, indeed, had the appearance of being most easily amused, for he had a smile for any sentence that was addressed to him. He wore a black velveteen jacket, which, at this time, was the regular Paris fashion for lounging French stablemen, but has since been adopted by lounging English gentlemen—and the stiff black velvet casquette of a German student, which protected his head, and looked as impenetrable to the elements as the dome of a cathedral.

Thinking that very possibly I might make him of use by getting him to inquire in various directions, as we traveled along, whether anything had been heard of an English lady's having died in any given place, and thus some clue be acquired, I informed André of the purpose of my voyage. A ghastly smile played over his countenance as I addressed him, and he seemed visibly affected.

"Ah! I know what it is to lose a wife!" at length he remarked, with a heavy sigh; "it is the greatest 'malheur' possible for a young man. I lost mine only six months ago, and I suffered—oh, how I suffered! And I suffer terribly even now, but in a different way to what you do—yes, in a very different way!" and he sighed again.

Feeling interested, I suppose from a sort of fellow-feeling influencing me, I forgot my own sorrow in thinking of his; and imagining that I might be enabled to say something consolatory to him, I inquired why he thought his suffering was different to mine.

"Ah," he replied, refraining with difficulty from tears, "je souffre beaucoup—I am obliged to give up my small glass of liqueur which I used to drink with my coffee. Ah! ça coute bien chèr! ça coute bien chèr!"

I could not understand how the loss of his wife could have interfered with liqueur-drinking. This was the strangest explanation I had ever heard given by an inconsolable widower; and venturing

to hope that I should not be hurting his feelings by pressing him on so delicate a subject, I asked him for further information.

"Ah! you do not comprehend?" he exclaimed. "It is very simple. My poor wife is dead. I have been compelled to give up liqueur, because I lay out so much money in masses for the repose of her soul; and I must economize in something. I can't give up smoking, because when I smoke I think, and the flavour of a nice mild cigar reminds me what a nice mild woman she was, et ça me fait plaisir. Then, I could not, on principle, abandon my 'choppe' of beer, because that 'fortifies' me under my affliction, and she, pauvre femme, always liked me to drink my beer, because she said it gave me a fresh complexion like a German's. Ah! l'etait une brave femme, une brave petite femme!"

And he sighed as deeply as if his sentiment was of the most exalted kind. I have no doubt that his sorrow was as real and heartfelt as any that the most flowery poet has depicted, or

that has ever been warbled forth in plaintive strain upon the stage to stir up the spirit of the impressionable audience.

I told André I hoped that the diversion of travelling would cause him to forget his sorrow, and promised him that if he were the means of my discovering where my wife had died, I would reward him in such a way that he should not want for beer for a long time to come.

At nine o'clock precisely the carriage was at the door of the hotel. It was a beautiful morning; the sun shone brightly overhead, and there was a gay and smiling look about the early people whom we passed in the Rue St. Honoré, and its continuation the Faubourg, as we rumbled along towards the barrier of the town. Everything and everybody looked cheerful, as if to mock me, absorbed, as I was, in dismal thoughts.

I longed to leave this gay city behind me. There is a quietness about the country, even in France, which is more congenial to a melancholy mind, than the noise and bustle of a large town. I say

"even in France," because, although there the merry milkmaid, in the performance of her daily task, the shepherdess, as she tends her flocks, and all the other villagers, love to sing their cheerful ditties everywhere in the open air, and "fill each pause the nightingale has made," still there is a sort of Arcadian simplicity about their rural notes, which gladdens all around, and imparts to those who hear them, even against their will, a portion of the light-heartedness of the producer of them.

It was after we had passed through Paris, and two or three little villages on its outskirts, and had emerged into the country, that this idea struck me. A neat little damsel, whose uncovered head exposed to view at least a double-handful of hazel brown hair, gracefully confined by a simple knot, attracted my attention. Her face was as sunburned as that of a thorough-bred gipsy, and although she had no regular Bohemian beauty to boast of, still there was that about her looks which would have told a connoisseur at once that, with

the advantages of fine clothes and fashion, she would have adorned a barouche, or attracted attention at the Italian Opera.

Her dress was of serge, and her shoes were wooden. As she sat upon a hillock by the road-side, simultaneously knitting a pair of stockings and tending a pair of goats, she was singing, in a most clear and musical voice, a joyous ditty, a portion of which reached my ear, as we passed along. So distinct was it, that I could catch the words. They were,

"Allons les fillettes,
Profitons les beaux jours,
Songez à vos amourettes,
Ca ne durera pas toujours."
S

I could not help envying this picturesque minstrel, who, a stranger to care, and evidently contented with her lot, was so melodiously yet gently warning young people of her own sex to take advantage of the fine weather, and not to love too late. But I had a sort of melancholy pleasure in envying her, and the pretty air of her song

sounded agreeably in my ear long after we had left her far behind.

As for André, the whole effect of the sweet strains was lost upon him, for barely had we got well out of Paris and its environs, before his head fell, like the mercury of a barometer upon the approach of rainy weather, and I soon had the opportunity of seeing that he could slumber as comfortably upon the box of a carriage as in a feather-bed.

Some coachmen seem to have a facility of sleeping, which many a restless individual might be inclined to covet, if it would not be wrong to do so. There must be something soporific about sitting perpetually on a box, reins and whip in hand, that amateur drivers are not acquainted with.

The cab-driver slumbers on his stand equally in warm and cold weather, regardless of the noise and bustle going on around him; the drayman begins nodding almost directly he has seated himself on the shafts and set his horses in motion;

and the sleeping carrier proceeds on his way just as his horse chooses to draw his blue cart along, as if he had got *carte blanche*—I mean no pun—from the public to use whichever side of the road he liked. You never see the same thing in the case of young gentlemen who guide dog-carts, or young ladies who charioteer Croydon "baskets." But, then, there is such a wide difference between what is done for pleasure and what is done for business!

At length, after having made a few fruitless inquiries by the way-side, at small villages which possessed a priest of their own, we arrived at St. Denis, a considerable town, of about twelve thousand inhabitants, situated, as the reader may be aware, on two branches of the Seine. Having stopped at the Hôtel du Grand Cerf, I asked first of all for the list of strangers, that I might see if the name of Madame Carlton was to be found in it; and having searched in vain, I begged to be directed to the house of the priest.

I was furnished with his address, and set

out to pay him a visit. He was at home, and I was ushered into his presence.

Monsieur Benoit (for such was his name) was an elderly man, of gigantic size and stature. I found him sitting in an old arm-chair, that had as straight a back as those in which old kings of France used to be crowned. He had a capacious tumbler at his side, in which was a tea-spoon and a goodly quantity of some beverage which looked quite hot and of a comforting nature.

He wore a large comforter wound round and round his neck and chin, and his red face appeared as alcoholic as the mixture he seemed to be imbibing.

He made me a low bow as I entered, and in a hoarse voice demanded my business, begging me to excuse his rising, as he was suffering from influenza.

I apologised for intruding, and asked him if I might take the liberty of seeking his assistance upon a matter of serious importance to myself.

He held his hand in a most significative way to

his ear, as I addressed him; and when I had done speaking, shook his head, and replied that he had not heard me.

I repeated what I had just said in a much louder key.

Again he shook his head, and told me, what I had already discovered, namely, that he was very deaf, explaining that he had caught the influenza some three weeks back, which had temporarily impaired his hearing.

It was with the greatest difficulty in the world, after bawling in his ear, that I managed to get so far as to make him understand that I had a favour to ask of him, which favour he signified to me he would grant, if it were in his power to do so.

I then explained, in as few words as I could, with what object I had sought him out.

However, it was in vain that I tried to make him understand me.

"A little louder!—speak a little louder!" he exclaimed, after each attempt that I made, endanger-

ing a blood-vessel each time that I shrieked at him; still I could not speak loud enough. I looked round the room, in the hope of seeing pen and ink, with a view of committing my statement to paper, but there was nothing of the sort in the apartment.

I feared that I should be compelled to wish him a good morning, and take my departure, but I determined first to make one more attempt. Feeling that I was much more likely to gain my point by brevity than by a long speech, after considering a moment, I cleared my throat, and in the very loudest key of which I was capable, I holloed into his ear, "During the last month, has your attendance been required by a lady stopping at any of the hotels?"

Wonderful to relate, I succeeded in making him hear, for he showed by his gesture that he had understood me.

He replied at once,

"Yes, yes, I think so—in fact, I am pretty sure. But before I make any statement, I must consult a

copy of the register, which I have in another room."

He then rose, and begging me to excuse him for an instant, proceeded in search of the copy in question.

"How very extraordinary," I thought to myself, "if my search should be so soon brought to an end. Yet how melancholy to find that my poor wife had breathed her last within four miles of where I had been lying, delirious and dangerously ill, at the time."

The suspense in which I was left was intense, for even should it prove to be the case that Emily had died here, and that she had been attended by Monsieur Benoit, I could not hope to get a very distinct repetition of her dying words, unless, indeed, monsieur's hearing should improve very much. Still I might reasonably hope to learn more than I now knew, and to be directed to the spot where they had laid her.

He seemed a good sort of man, judging from what I had seen of him, and had shown great

willingness to be of use, as soon as he comprehended the service I required of him; so I could not help hoping that, if it should turn out that it was he who had been present at the sad lone death-bed scene, from which those were excluded who would, if necessary, have flown from the uttermost parts of the earth to nurse her, to watch and pray with her during those trying moments that separate life from death; he had done all in his power to comfort her in her great distress.

In a few moments Monsieur Benoit returned, and whilst still on his way towards his arm-chair, spoke thus, partly to himself, and partly to me—

"Yes, yes, I thought I was right. This is doubtless the case that monsieur is come to inquire about. How very strange that I should have been called in!

"About three weeks ago, at about twelve o'clock at night, after I had retired to rest, and was already in my first sleep, I was awoke by a violent knocking at my door. It was François, my valet,

who was making all the noise he was able, in order to rouse me—for I always sleep with my door locked, c'est beaucoup plus sur," he explained.

I wished he would get on with his explanation. What could I care if he slept with his door locked or not?

"François called me as loud as he could by name, a great many times before I replied, thinking that there might be thieves in the house, and I was not going to open the door and let them in—I was not so *bête*."

I was obliged to restrain my patience, and let him continue in his own way.

"At last I ventured to hazard the question, 'What do you want?' François replied that a foreign lady, at the Hôtel de France, had sent down to me, imploring my instant presence. I got up at once, much as I disliked doing so, but my maxim has always been, 'Duty before sleep,' so I did not hesitate. I slipped on my things, and enveloping my shoulders in an ecclesiastical paletôt,

and taking with me a large breviary, in purple morocco, I hurried off to the Hôtel de France.

"There was a great deal of excitement among the servants, who were all up. 'Madame l'Etrangere desires to see you directly,' cried one after the other, a dozen of them. 'You must make haste. Second story, number forty, to the right.'

"I ascended to the number indicated, and knocking at the door, was instantly ordered to enter. It was an Irish lady, who had just been safely delivered of three children, all boys, and she had sent for me to give them my benediction, and to inform me that she intended to bring up the finest of the three to the Church. The three children all lived. Their mother did very well, and, a week after she left the town with her offspring, I caught the influenza from being disturbed at night. She was a fine woman, of about forty, and had just come from Ireland."

This was Monsieur Benoit's statement. As soon as it was concluded, he took up his tumbler, and restored himself, after so much talking, by a long

pull at its contents. For my own part, having been worked up to the highest pitch of excitement during the early part of his explanation, and thrown down the steep descent of disappointment at its conclusion, without making the slightest remark upon what I had heard, I wished Monsieur Benoit good morning, and took my departure, extremely disheartened at the result of my interview.

As soon as I could find André, whom I at last discovered in a most uninviting-looking restaurant, some distance from the hotel, where he was enjoying the extravagance and fragrance of a cigar at two sous, and a "choppe" of Strasburg beer, I ordered him to "put to" at once, and was soon again on my journey.

It would afford the reader very little satisfaction to be informed of all the places that I stopped at on my road, with the view of gaining some information that might assist me, or to describe the country through which I passed; because any account that I could give of it would not be half so good

as that which the "Fidus Achates," accompanying almost every Englishman abroad, "Murray's Handbook" could furnish.

There were the usual rows of tall poplar trees, standing like so many sentinels on either side of the long pieces of straight road, which stretched from village to village; whilst here and there, at a turn of the road, a distant view of the winding Seine, peopled with barges, and long lines of floating timber, relieved the eye as it wandered over a wide extent of boundless fields.

Peasants, in the most primitive attire, might be seen cultivating the land, driving their ox-carts, and carrying heavy weights on their heads, from point to point, with a cheerfulness, and contented look, of which I could not help feeling jealous. They were, indeed, "Agricolæ fortunati nimium," as compared with myself. The burdens which they carried about seemed lighter to them than the load of care by which my heart was being borne down.

The robust and brown country girls re-

strained the wandering propensities of their "bijoux," their "mignionnes," and their "chèriés," as they are wont to denominate the cows and heifers committed to their care, by addressing them in a most loving manner; but then, in all probability, they are thinking all the time of their peculiar "treasures" and "darlings" among the rustic swains of their acquaintances, who "danced them out" so well at the last village *fête*; and they are as happy as princesses, in anticipation of the next, to which their "Jacques," or their "Alphonse," or their "Auguste," as the case may be, has promised to take them.

There is something extremely "taking" about a real, true-born, thorough-bred, French peasant, when you really understand the character, although people will say there *can* be no attractions in sunburnt damsels, in serge and sabots, and nothing interesting in swarthy youths in blouses and corduroy; but then, take them altogether, they are superior to their British fellow-labourers. Their patois, be it ever so barbarous even, sounds so

much softer and musical than the dull drawling lingo of the English rustic; and in the well-turned sentences used by the former in the course of conversation, may be heard expressions and words, a literal translation of which would be lost on the British "clod."

A country labourer in the south of France once said to me, as I was asking him questions about the country on the top of a diligence, where we were both perched,

"Monsieur is a German, is he not?"

I replied that I was an Englishman.

To which he rejoined,

"Ah! I knew that you were from the North, because you speak gutterally, whilst inhabitants of the South have a labial pronunciation."

Where could you produce an English butcher capable of detecting to what nation a man belonged according as he spoke, "gutturallement" or "labialment?"

I was once paying a visit at a French gentleman's house in the neighbourhood of Fontainebleau,

when strolling into a meadow close to the house one morning, I came upon a young peasant girl, who was occupied in cutting grass with a reaping-hook. As I was at the time taking every opportunity I could find of talking French, and as I saw that the girl had a fine set of teeth, I drew her into conversation, partly in order to make her show them, and partly to exercise my knowledge of the Gallic tongue.

We had not talked long before she informed me that the day on which we had entered was the anniversary of the death of Henry IV., of France.

On my expressing astonishment at her being aware of this, she replied,

"Ah, par exemple! Does Monsieur think I know nothing? Henry the Fourth was a great king."

"Yes," I replied; "but he lived two hundred years ago, or more."

"What does that matter?" she rejoined; "would it not be a shame to have no idea of the history of this *beau pays*, not to know what it was formerly,

and how our nation has arrived at the state in which it now is? We French adore the history of our country. Since the French name is become celebrated all over Europe, when foreigners even like to study our history, it is not allowable for any French person to be ignorant of it."

When I heard these remarks, I felt completely taken aback, and did not dare to say anything more, for fear of showing my ignorance.

Such is not, I am certain, an exceptional case of knowledge. You cannot find a French peasant unable to talk to you about the crusades, about the battle of Brenneville, the troubles of France during the reigns of Philippe de Valois and Jean le Bon; the glories of Du Guesclin, the heroism of Joan of Arc, the battles of Marignan, Ivry, Fleurus, Steinkerque; the great men who flourished in the reign of Louis the Fourteenth—such as Condé, Luxembourg, Corneille, Racine, Moliére, succeeded by Voltaire and Rousseau; whilst with all the later events of importance, from the reign of Louis the Sixteenth to their own time,

French peasants are wonderfully conversant.

How very different, too, is the style of music and song which they love, compared to that which suits the tastes and comprehension of Englishmen in their position of life. The latter knows and is contented with something like "The days we went a-gypsying," an old hunting song or two, and "God save the Queen," whilst the former possesses an almost exhaustless collection of pretty songs ever present to his memory—the theme of his lively airs being love and spring flowers, love and shady arbours, and laughing valleys, and fair scenery of all sorts that can be associated with "l'amour;" and the gems of Beranger sound just as pretty when adapted to the "wood-notes wild" of French peasant girls, as when sung in the most exquisite way by finished artists, or when warbled forth by the cultivated voices of rank and fashion.

Where will you find a village girl in any department who cannot valse and dance the polka unimpeded by bad music and thick shoes? Whereas

an English villager of either sex, who can perform well upon "the light fantastic toe," is a rarity seldom to be found.

We proceeded at a jog-trot upon our way. Luckily the horses were very clever at guiding themselves, for during the whole of the space from village to village, André slept as soundly as if he had been drinking laudanum instead of beer; and with his head slightly on one side, after the manner of a roosting pigeon—as if by instinct, whenever we approached a house of refreshment for man and beast, or a way-side inn, he invariably woke up, and began cracking his whip in the most lively way.

I had paid a great many flying visits to village curés in the course of the day; and when the opportunity offered, I had walked round one of those pretty little cemeteries, so many of which are interspersed about the country; but no sort of tidings had I been able to gain.

The shades of evening were falling, as we drove into the neat little town of Clermont, where it was

my intention to halt for the night. The sight of a traveller's carriage was something, it seemed, wonderfully out of the common; for as we drove along the narrow street, the inhabitants came out of their houses to stare at the carriage, as if its contents were Royalty. We pulled up in front of "The Sword," which was the name of the only house in the town that could be called an hotel.

An important looking man, who was cook, housekeeper, and host combined, came forth to review me, with his paper hat on, to judge for himself whether I looked sufficiently a grandee to be lodged in his state apartment. It contained a magnificent couch, upon the pillow of which a crowned head was rumoured to have once rested—or whether I should be consigned to one of the smaller chambers, like an ordinary mortal. Showing his teeth, and looking as bland as a quadrilateral scar upon his face would allow him, he came pompously forward.

Monsieur Pepin, for such was his name, was an

old soldier who had distinguished himself on active service as a brave cuirassier and a good cuisinier; but having had enough of it, had retired when his time was up, married a small independence, and taken this hotel, which, in honour of his sabre wound, he had christened "The Sword."

"I salute you, Monsieur; I salute you," he exclaimed, as soon as I had got sufficiently near to be addressed. "Monsieur will, I trust, do me the honour of bivouacking in my hotel," he added. "'The Sword' is respected all over France for its good beds and comfortable quarters," and he treated me to a regular military salute as he concluded the sentence.

I told him it was my intention to stay for the night, which called forth another salute. He then summoned the houseman (there were no housemaids belonging to the establishment).

The latter appeared in a moment—for all his servants were under wonderful discipline—and he bellowed out to him an injunction relative to shewing me to my room; but I could not understand

what were the words he used, for the order was delivered exactly in the same snarling, roaring fashion that a word of command is given to troops on a field-day, always so incomprehensible to non-military spectators; but it was, to say the least of it, satisfactory to my pride, however expensive the honour conferred on me was, when I found, on reaching the first floor, that I had been considered worthy of tenanting the royalty room.

Then came the host again, before me this time in the capacity of cook, to inquire what I would eat. I would be pleased with his cooking; he informed he had once sent up a friture for a marshal of France, two generals of division, and five commanding officers, immediately after a battle, and they had eaten it all, and voted him their thanks unanimously afterwards; and the marshal had ordered him, on the spur of the moment, to be instantly promoted from the ranks, but some mistake had been made, and the order was not carried out.

Ah! he knew a thing or two about cooking, he said. Would Monsieur allow him to send up a good dinner, according to his own taste? "Vous serez content je vous promets," he added.

I was not the least hungry, only dreadfully tired, but at the same time it would never do for a traveller, occupying the royalty room, to say that such was the case. Great people, and those who are treated as great people, ought never to go to an hotel and say they are not hungry, and don't require dinner; or, at all events, if they do say so, they should make up their mind to the consequences. A good fire and twenty per cent. is immediately taken off their greatness by the people of the hotel. The servants will become slack in their attendance; and you may ring your bell till the wire is in danger of being broken, before your summons is answered. The hot water that you order will be the cold element with the chill off; your boots will be returned to your door with no more polish upon them than that pertaining to a bog-oak inkstand, and the master of the house

will only give you half a bow when you come across him.

As I calculated that it would be but an addition of a few francs more to my bill, and the opportunity of charging for a good dinner did not present itself often probably to the host, I consented to the repast being sent up, and could not help feeling glad that I had done so, for the man seemed delighted; and I rejoiced to think that, at all events, if I was miserable myself, I had made another person happy.

In a few minutes Pepin was standing before the main dresser of his kitchen, sending forth his assistants in different directions to procure different culinary articles, giving directions that were instantly obeyed, and looking as important as a general upon the field of battle; whilst ever and anon his finger would be applied to his mouth, as he communed with himself about the proper construction of different dishes. Now and then he would raise his hand still higher, and he might have been seen thoughtfully scratching his head, in

the hope of being able to extract therefrom the discovery of some new sauce, to which he could give his own name, and so hand himself down to posterity.

"Sauce Pepin!" how grand that would look, he had often thought, in the bill of fares at the restaurants. It would bring his own name, so historical and uncommon as it was, into notice. His friends might imagine, as was perhaps the case, that there possibly was some royal blood in his veins; and, at all events, people in after ages would confound King Pepin and Sauce Pepin together, in the same sort of way as some persons associate boeuf a la Chateaubriand with the great Chateaubriand, and Place Henri Quatre with the Grand Henri.

"Then, who knew? The traveller might be a great gourmand, who would fall in love with my sauce, and through me it might become known to the world; and I would take out a patent for my sauce, and my sauce would not only be talked of, but be in every mouth."

At length a bright thought struck him. The

combination of a certain number of good things judiciously blended together, must make something entirely new to cookery, and extra agreeable to the palate. Having arranged in his own mind how it was to be done, he applied himself to working out the theory of his sauce. How excellent he thought it, after the usual trials of a little more of this, and a little less of that, had been made upon it, and was at length satisfied that it was a regular success! Such a delicious colour, too! It was a complete *chef d'œuvre.*

Then what should it be eaten with? There were some veal cutlets, just come from the butcher. Just the very thing. They should be served up as *Cotelettes de veau,-Sauce Pepin.* This was to be the *bonne bouche* of the whole dinner.

After waiting for some little time, the saloon adjoining the room where I was sitting was thrown open, and two waiters, in snow-white ties, announced that dinner was ready. Soup, of course, came first, then the best hors d'œuvre that could be produced in the short space of time that had elapsed

since dinner was ordered. Then came a fillet of beef, which might have been good, if it had not been as hard as a fillet of leather would have been. Then followed a large carp, the only fish to be had for love or money in the town. Then a sweetbread; and next in order came the grand new dish, which was ushered in with all the honour due to "its first appearance upon any board," inasmuch as while one waiter carried in the precious dish and placed it on the table, the other came up on the off-side and served me with a large gilt-edged card, upon which was inscribed, in large letters, "Cotelettes de veau, Sauce Pepin." The two last words being composed of fine, full-grown capital letters from beginning to end.

At first I was unable to understand why this dish should be treated with such marked distinction. Was it, I thought, because Clermont was celebrated for its calves, or was it a particular day in the year when custom enjoined that respectable people should eat veal? I knew very well that the eating of salt fish belongs especially to Ash

Wednesday, pancakes to Shrove Tuesday, and goose to Michaelmas, but I had never heard of any particular veal days in the year. So I consulted the waiter, who explained to me that the dish was a new discovery.

Of course I felt bound to taste it, and finding it not nasty, proclaimed it to be very nice, which judgment was instantly carried down to the anxious inventor, who was, therefore, overpowered with joy.

The rest of the dinner was served up with the same routine as the first part had been. There was a large fowl dished up in a bed of watercresses, and the waiter, to endue it with an importance not its own, called it a "capon." There was a flaming soufflet au chocolat, and a dish of vegetables. I must say I was extremely relieved when the appearance of dessert indicated that the reign of succession of grand dishes was at an end.

The next morning I rose betimes, and as soon as ever I thought that I might venture upon a morn-

ing call, presented myself at the door of one of the parish priests. He was at home, and I found him an excessively intelligent and agreeable man, but he could give me no tidings of my lost wife. He told me that he was sure no case such as the one I described to him had taken place anywhere in Clermont, or the immediate neighbourhood; but he encouraged me with assurances that, if I persevered, sooner or later I must ultimately be successful.

He promised to write to two or three curés of his acquaintance, in different parts of France, for information, and I gave him my address in Paris, where he could communicate with me if necessary. He was most kind, and offered to help me in any way in his power, and seemed to enter into my feelings in the most sincere way.

I stayed and talked to him some time, and as he knew the country very well between Clermont and Calais, and Clermont and Boulogne, the two routes which I was about to take in succession, he specified to me all the towns and principal villages

where it would be of any use to stop and make inquiries, and thus saved me an immense deal of unnecessary trouble. Of course I thanked him for his kindness. He was evidently perfectly disinterested, and I was quite sorry when our interview was over.

He was the first person with whom I had felt perfectly at my ease since I had left England. He was a young man, who had not long been ordained, and he looked as if he had seen some of the adversities of this life. I am sure that if his duties would have allowed him to do so, he would have willingly accompanied me in my search.

We exchanged cards, and I found that his name was Alphonse Mercier, and that he was a native of Alsace.

As soon as I returned to the hotel, I bade André get ready for a start. He was very quick in putting carriage and horses together, when once the order was given, and I was satisfied with him on that score. To his principal failing, that of sleeping as he drove, I could not so easily

reconcile myself; but luckily his horses conducted themselves satisfactorily.

My hotel bill was a pretty large one, but I was not in a frame of mind to have made strong objection had it been three times as large. As I was leaving "The Sword," its proprietor came forward, with rather a disappointed manner, and "hoped that I should not forget him. He was sure that I should not meet with it anywhere else."

What did he mean, I was obliged to ask.

He seemed more disappointed,—thinking, at least, that his new dish must have been the feature of my sojourn at Clermont.

I had almost forgotten it till he reminded me. I promised to send all my friends to "The Sword" at Clermont to eat Cotelettes de veau, Sauce Pepin; but I am afraid I thought no more of the affair.

From Clermont, I went to Beauvais, thence to Amiens, Arras, Hazelbrouck, St. Omer, Calais. From Calais, I proceeded to Boulogne, and subsequently to Montreuil and Abbeville. Alas! every-

where, without discovering a trace of my poor wife! I had toiled like a slave, journeying day after day, let the weather be what it would. At each place where I stopped, I told the same story and received the same answer. Nothing had been heard in the least resembling the case that I knew had occurred somewhere, but where I could not tell.

In those days there were few, if any, country journals in France, and these were taken in by wealthy people, so that an occurrence, such as the one I was ever inquiring about, was not likely to have come within the knowledge of the persons I chanced to meet.

Having at length reached Amiens again, after accomplishing the circuit which led me back to it, I returned to Paris as quickly as I could. There I hoped I might find a letter giving me some encouragement from Alphonse Mercier, my Clermont friend. The hope had but a very slight foundation to rest upon. He only knew two or three priests scattered over France.

" The heart bowed down through weight of woe
To tenderest hopes will cling,
To thoughts and impulse whilst they flow,
That can no comfort bring."

It was already three weeks since I started from Paris. I felt that I had gained but little strength. André was ever ready for the longest day, he never demurred if I proposed pressing on a little farther, if we came to the end of our appointed day's journey sooner than usual; and his sturdy horses seemed as if they would never tire.

Unsatisfactory and discouraging as had been my first exploration, I was by no means inclined to give in. My task had been begun, and I was as determined as ever to persevere in my search.

CHAPTER IV.

"A thousand ills beset us as we go."

S. ROGERS.

"I THINK you have been very much to blame, Mrs. Carlton. You have shown an amount of imprudence, combined with a degree of folly, I could never have thought you capable of exhibiting under any circumstances."

The only reply was expressed in a succession of hysteric sobs.

My wife had called to pay Lady Strafford an early morning visit, in a state of very great anxiety; and she had found her friend not only as uneasy as herself, but a great deal more irritable.

"There is nothing of which a woman should be more careful than her reputation," she continued, in a tone of grave rebuke from her arm-chair, from which she had scarcely deigned to rise to receive her visitor, who had found a seat on the sofa opposite, on which she was half reclining, with her handkerchief to her eyes. "But married women, Mrs. Carlton, ladies who hold a position in society, are bound not only by a sense of self-respect, but equally by a feeling of regard for their interests, to be extremely cautious in their relations with the other sex."

These truisms either did not admit of a denial, or my wife was too much under the influence of her emotion to attempt a reply.

"But when a married woman," added Lady Strafford, with increasing asperity, "who has had the advantages of the best moral education and the best social examples, moreover, who has moved all her life among ladies distinguished for irreproachable conduct, chooses to compromise herself with a gentleman, and that gentleman the husband

of her friend, the world, Mrs. Carlton, will be likely to pronounce it a very bad case of misconduct."

My poor wife felt these hard words in every fibre of her delicate frame, but was evidently too dispirited to resent, or so overpowered by her grief as to be unable to attempt any defence.

Her friend was in a humour for lecturing, she considered, too, that she ought not to let the present opportunity pass of speaking her mind; and when a woman believes that she has cause of offence, on a proper occasion for fault-finding, it is not often that she stops till she has exhausted her eloquence, and her subject.

Lady Strafford prided herself upon her circumspection, her propriety, her moral dignity, her keen sense of what was due to herself, almost as much as upon her title. As the wife of a baronet, as the possessor of an acknowledged claim to social dignity, she felt it a duty to hold her head up very high, and show to an ad-

miring world how thoroughly she appreciated her position.

She felt it no less her duty to represent to an erring sister, the enormity of any offence which that unfortunate might have committed against the stern code she so rigidly observed. But the offender her ladyship was called upon in the present instance to reprove, lay under the disadvantage of peculiarly aggravating circumstances, which made the fault deeper, and necessitated a more severe reproof.

She had contrived to associate herself in her offence with the one person in the world she ought to have been most careful of complicating in such transactions. She ought to have strictly kept herself from anything in the slightest degree approaching impropriety with her friend's husband. There could be no doubt of that.

Lady Strafford was perfectly well aware that there was not so much as a particle of criminality in the case; but then the consequences of her friend's conduct threatened to be quite as serious,

as if she had acted discreditably—and she was disposed to judge by the consequences, not by the cause.

"I think nothing could be more thoughtless than your accepting my husband's escort," said Lady Strafford, beginning again with increased energy. "It was a grave error of judgment, and very much surprised me at the time, I assure you, Mrs. Carlton. *I* never could have acted so injudiciously; *I* should have thought of others as well as of myself. But a still graver error was having recourse to falsehood, when a truthful statement was imperative; not only for your own interests, but for the interests of one who, in consequence of your thoughtless behaviour, had been made an associate in your folly."

"Indeed, Lady Strafford, I was so flurried I did not know what I was saying," exclaimed the contrite offender, scarcely audible from the violence of her emotion.

"An innocent woman ought always to know what she is saying," was the stern rejoinder.

"I was innocent!" cried my wife, looking up indignantly.

"I do not say you were not, Mrs. Carlton. Of course I know you were innocent. But—"

"I dare say if you had been as frightened as I was, you would have said——"

"I should have told the truth, Mrs. Carlton, you may depend upon it. It was not only the best course to adopt, but the wisest."

"I don't pretend to be so wise as you are, Lady Strafford; you know I never did. You were always so superior to me. And lately, somehow or other—I don't know why—I have felt so very strange, as hardly to be aware of what I was about. Mr. Carlton has noticed it, and has been more than once cross; and when he is cross, of course, I am dreadfully put out. When he questioned me about my walking with Sir Francis, I never knew him to look as he did. I was surprised by his unexpected return, and so excited by his questions, that I said the first words which presented themselves to me, as likely to be considered satisfactory. Indeed, I

never was so frightened and confused in the whole course of my life."

Lady Strafford was now silent. She continued to look severe, and was unquestionably dissatisfied; whether with the attempted exculpation, or from the unpleasant impression the affair had left upon her, I am unable to determine.

"And what brings you here, so early, Mrs. Carlton?" she at last demanded.

"Oh, Lady Strafford," cried her friend renewing her sobbing, "he has not returned home. I am afraid he does not mean to return home; I have not seen him since he parted from me in anger, and I am fearful that he does not intend to live with me again."

"Has he left word where he is gone?"

"I have questioned the servants, but they pretend to know nothing, yet they look so frightened, I am afraid that something terrible has happened, and I hurried here to ascertain from you if your husband had——"

"My husband!" exclaimed Lady Strafford,

turning pale, and starting under the influence of a sudden sense of alarm; "he left me last night to visit a friend who had sent for him on urgent business, and he took leave of me very affectionately. Surely your foolish conduct has not produced a quarrel between Sir Francis and Mr. Carlton!"

"I don't know, I'm sure!" cried my wife, wringing her hands; "there was nothing said or done by me that ought to have made them quarrel. But Mr. Carlton was dreadfully cross, and with such a shocking fancy in his head, if he met Sir Francis, he might. But I'm sure I don't know anything about it. I only know that he has not returned home, nor written so much as a line to me."

Lady Strafford's face assumed an expression of terror.

"They are both absent from home at the same time," she muttered to herself; "under the circumstances there can be but one explanation of this—a duel has been arranged."

"Oh! Lady Strafford, don't break my heart!" exclaimed her friend, piteously, as she clasped her hands, her cheeks streaming with tears. "Don't say that I caused them to quarrel!—don't say that I induced them to attempt to kill each other!"

Lady Strafford took no notice of her appeal. She was absorbed in her own painful thoughts, and trying to think what she ought to do.

Presently she rang the bell.

"Order the carriage immediately!" she cried.

The footman disappeared almost as quickly as he had entered, his scared look betraying his consciousness of the evil impending over the house.

"You don't think Mr. Carlton is in any danger, do you, Lady Strafford?"

"It is impossible to say," replied her ladyship, curtly; "a hot-headed young man who makes a deadly quarrel out of the folly of his wife, can scarcely help being in danger."

This reply did not give any consolation to her friend, nor was it intended to do so. Lady Strafford was in no humour to be conciliatory.

The case had assumed in her eyes an infinitely graver complexion. She could not be in the slightest degree solicitous about me. Indeed, I have very little doubt that she would have thought any amount of injury I might receive, no more than I had merited; but she could not contemplate with patience the idea that her husband might be the sufferer or the victim.

The thought that Sir Francis had not only been drawn into a scandal which was likely to be as great a source of annoyance to him as to her, but had been forced into a duel which might maim him for life, or, as probably, render her a widow, was intolerable; therefore her ladyship was in no amicable state of mind, as she hurried into an adjoining room, and in an incredibly short time, hurried back, equipped for a carriage drive, leaving her distressed friend, without the slightest sympathy, to her own bitter reflections.

"Dear Lady Strafford," the latter cried at last, "I did not know Mr. Carlton was the least jealous."

"Then you ought to have known it," was the reply.

"I did not think there was any harm in Sir Francis seeing me home."

"I hope, Mrs. Carlton, that you see it now. The death of your husband or of mine may be the result."

My poor wife again sunk her streaming face upon her hands, and cried convulsively.

"Oh! here is the carriage," observed her friend, who was near the window. "You can stay here, Mrs. Carlton, till you feel sufficiently recovered to return home. I am going to the police office, to see if there is a possibility of my being in time to prevent the foolish business having a fatal issue."

Without taking any further notice of the occupant of the sofa, Lady Strafford walked hurriedly out of the room. She voted her friend a dangerous acquaintance, and determined to drop her at the first favourable opportunity, let what might come of her present imprudence.

As she proceeded downstairs, she thought over

her resolution to apply to a magistrate for advice, fully satisfied that it was the only proper step she could take. She had read of duels having been stopped by arresting the principals before the hostile meeting could take place, and binding them over to keep the peace to each other, and she roused herself up with the hope that she might be in time to do this.

So profoundly absorbed was she in the pursuit of this idea, that she was unconscious of an unusual stir in the ground floor, till she descended to the landing, when a spectacle presented itself which for several seconds seemed to deprive her of sensation.

Coming along the hall towards the foot of the stairs were several men, carrying with extraordinary care a heavy burthen. As she dimly discerned the figure, Lady Strafford was convinced that it was a corpse; and as she heard some one giving directions for the bearers to proceed up-stairs, there could be no doubt on her mind that it was the dead body of her husband.

A piercing shriek resounded through the house, and she sank on the floor in a swoon.

CHAPTER V.

"She disappeared and left me dark; I waked—
To find her, or for ever to deplore
Her loss."

MILTON.

ON arriving at Paris, my first thought was to inquire if any letters had arrived for me. There was one from Mr. Rivers in answer to mine. He was still naturally dreadfully afflicted, and little reconciled to the loss of a daughter so sincerely loved. Poor man! I felt certain that his grief must have been of no ordinary kind. As he had loved, so would he grieve.

He applauded my design of travelling in search of information, and regretted that he could not

come and assist me, his health being inadequate to any such exertion; indeed he assured me he had been for some time confined to his bed.

Although I had nothing satisfactory to tell him, I wrote off at once an account of my recent travels, telling him that I was about to start again on another tour, which I trusted would be more successful.

There was a short kind note from Alphonse Mercier, my Clermont friend, informing me that he had heard from the brethren to whom he had written, but without gaining any clue to my mystery. He had again written, he said, to some relations of his in the south of France, as well as to others who lived near Nancy. He told me not to be discouraged by my want of success, nor relax my efforts in pursuing the inquiry, promising all the assistance in his power. I wrote and thanked him, and informed the worthy man of my proposed route.

Having paid André for the last journey, I asked him if he felt disposed to continue to me the services of his driving, his carriages and horses. He

replied instantaneously that he was ready to drive me for the rest of my life.

Two days after my arrival in Paris, I made a fresh start. As on the last occasion when I quitted this gay city, the day was bright and fine. The sun, which, for two or three days before, had refused to show itself, seemed to shine forth with more splendour after its long retirement from public view, imparting extraordinary radiance to everybody and everything around, and appearing, as it were, to smile upon my undertaking.

A little Savoyard organ-boy was extracting a melody of a very lively nature from his mahogany box, close to the hotel-door, as I passed through it about to enter my carriage; and the hotel-keeper's daughter came from her office to honour me with an amiable "bon voyage," hoping, with a most fascinating look, that I should soon return to Paris.

In spite of all this, I was miserable at heart. So long as we were still threading our way along crowded streets and thoroughfares, I was more or less lured away from my thoughts, and involun-

tarily interested, as one cannot help being, by the various scenes that meet one's eye; but when, after crossing the river and the series of canals which connect Paris with the country, we were at length outside the town, and in possession of a wide road, no longer disputed by a throng of miscellaneous vehicles, I felt myself relapsing into that state of despondency which had accompanied me during so long a portion of my last tour.

Conscience would never let me alone, and refused to make peace with me. I had spilt innocent blood; I had made two persons unhappy, and had been the cause of my wife's death.

Often when I went to introduce myself to some village curé, and told my oft-repeated tale, and asked for information, I was received with suspicion and incredulity. I was obliged to submit to be cross-questioned by those who disbelieved my story; called upon to show my passport, interrogated as to the creed I professed, and regarded as an intruder, if I presented myself at a moment when some insignificant member of the French

clergy was in the habit of denying himself to all comers, and instead of being civily answered, I was informed, in the most disagreeable way, that "nothing of the sort happened here," or referred to the cemetery, where everybody's name was inscribed over his tomb.

But I had determined not to be discouraged, and to go through every persecution which might arise in the performance of the duty I had imposed upon myself.

Asnières was the first place at which I stopped in this my second journey from Paris. I could not help being struck with its beauty as I passed through it. It had not then become what it is in these days the "Richmond" of the French metropolis, to which the gay Parisian repairs, with a view of enjoying a few hours recreation and a sumptuous repast, in company with his chère amie. The attractions of the locality were then much the same as they are now. The banks of the rapidly running river were just as pretty, picturesque villas had already been erected, and

the woods were as shady and pleasant, only they had not become fashionable, and the variety-loving pleasure-seeker had as yet withheld his patronage.

Having failed to get any sort of information here, I proceeded onwards through a fertile country, interspersed with small and homely-looking villages, till I came to Mantes, a town of sufficient importance to be a sous prefecture; and as the heat had been great throughout the day, and André declared that his horses were tired, I determined to stay here for the night, very much to my driver's satisfaction, as he could not bear putting up at the inns of small towns when he said that his horses were badly treated, though of course he really meant that he was himself the sufferer.

We drove to the best hotel in the town, whose antlered ensign indicated to the world that its name was Le Grand Cerf. A little Frenchman, of a very plethoric-looking countenance, dressed in a brown holland suit, and without a hat, came to the

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door to receive me. He was a most extraordinary specimen of humanity, having apparently an unmanageable twitch perpetually travelling about from one extremity of his frame to another. It was just as if a large lump of quicksilver had escaped from some thermometer-maker's shop, and had taken refuge within his frame.

He could not get through the briefest sentence without either catching up one or other of his legs, as if a sinew had suddenly given way; or raising his arm from his side half way up to his chin, as if he had received a sudden electric shock; or blinking his eyes, as if a pair of flies had simultaneously flown into them; or working his jaws together, as if he were masticating the air; or turning his head sharply round one way or the other, at the peril of ricking his neck.

He was as thin as a lath—probably the result of his so seldom being, even for an instant, in a state of tranquillity. He had a red face and black hair; his features bore a decided impress of acuteness about them, his eyes, nose, and teeth, looking

as sharp as those of a full-grown fox. Not a disagreeable-looking fox though, be it understood; on the contrary, it would have been unjust to have likened him to anything but a most good-tempered, good-natured, amiable sort of fox, that it would take a good deal to ruffle.

Monsieur Renard (for it is more civil to talk of him by his right name) came hopping down the steps of the hotel to welcome me directly the carriage stopped, and before I was quite safely upon terra firma, began asking me whether I would (right leg up) like to be shown at once (left arm raised) to my room, or go into the salon—at the end of which sentence he began blinking at me at express-train speed, never ceasing till I had expressed myself in favour of retirement.

"Bien, Bien," he exclaimed, twitching his head violently on one side, which exertion was succeeded by some most rapid arm movement, continuing till it became the leg's turn to do duty.

I was very glad indeed to get out of the reach of this sensation hotel-keeper. It was so

disagreeable to be obliged to witness the St. Vitus's dance action that seemed to have taken entire posession of him.

I was not treated the least as a great man at the Grand Cerf. There was no fuss made with me as at the Sword at Clermont; I was put into the second floor room, and it was not till after I had been at the hotel upwards of an hour that an under-waiter came to ask me if I was going to take any refreshment. I could not think what I had done to deserve such inattention and neglect of customary civility, but I was presently enlightened. André came puffing up to my room, beseeching me to look out of the window, if I wanted to see something magnificent.

It was an infantry regiment on their march to Paris, home from foreign service. They had arrived at Havre two or three days ago, and were making such a sensation throughout their triumphant march from the sea-coast to the metropolis, as such things always did and always will occasion in France.

"Oh! look at the beautiful soldiers!" exclaimed André, stuffing his wide frame as far out of that of one of the windows of my room as he could get it. He was as full of martial ardour, though he was only a proprietor of job horses, as any young lady who has ever run away from school to become a *vivandiere.*

He showed his sympathy with the *braves soldats,* not by roaring out a good honest cheer, as Englishmen would have done, but by "agitating his pockethandkerchief," as he called it. Frenchmen, however, are not so fond of giving vent to their feelings of approbation by a chorus of hurrahs, as we Englishmen are. I once saw two Frenchmen looking on, as a wild body of the British public was engaged in mobbing the winner of the Derby, just after the race was over. The people were brandishing their hats in the air, and indulging in the wildest demonstrations of delight.

As soon as their lungs were exhausted, I heard one Frenchman remark to the other, "What a pity they are not attached to the cathedral service at

Notre Dame. They would make charming choristers!"

The reason I had been so neglected in the hotel was, that the officers of the marching regiment were going to be billeted here; and after the soldiers had been dismissed to their several quarters for the night, in they came, making a terrible noise, by tramping all over the establishment, hallooing to each other. The uproar they created was insupportable.

For about two hours hardly anything was to be heard all over the passages but Achilles shouting for Hector, Cæsar for Pompey, Hercule for Hannibal, Victor for Dagobert, and so on. They dined just below me, and made such a noise laughing and talking together, even during the first part of the repast, that it was quite overpowering; but when they came to discuss, towards the end of the meal, some champagne, which the twitching landlord had sent up with his compliments, begging them to accept it from him, a humble child of "France reconnaissante," for their valorous deeds, then

Achilles and Hector, and Cæsar and Hercules, &c., began to get so painfully boisterous, that I only wished the divine Bellona would drop down for an instant, and restore these classical but carousing warriors to order.

It was quite late in the evening before I could get anything to eat. At any other day that I might have arrived here, probably I should have been treated with all the dignity of an English milord, as I should doubtless have been considered; but as it was, I was a nonentity—completely put in the shade by these military luminaries.

Being very tired, after a long journey in the heat of the day, I retired to bed in pretty good time; but sleep was impossible. Far into the night was prolonged the noisy symposium which was taking place just below me. Songs and choruses followed each other in such extraordinary quick succession, that a poor tired traveller like myself had no time to fall off to sleep during the intervals between them.

Of course it would have been useless to have

made any complaint. The good people of Mantes had too seldom the opportunity of welcoming such heroes as these, to dream of restraining their animation.

The floor that separated me from them was so deficient in thickness, that I was compelled to hear almost all the words of their songs. Some were gay, some sentimental; some were regular garrison songs, some were drawing-room ones, but each was just as disagreeable to me as the other. Had I not been so wretched in mind, I would have been well enough amused, but in my present state, enjoyment was impossible.

At length, to my immense relief, I heard chairs pushed ominously back, and a general move made. The brave men dispersed all over the hotel, to rooms prepared for them. A great deal of tumbling about took place in the passages, much to the amusement of those who were able to walk straight. One of them I distinctly heard coming down head foremost on the staircase. It was poor Hector—he was very far gone indeed, and like his ancient

namesake, had to be dragged along. He was deposited in the chamber adjoining mine, and his companions left him to sleep off the effects of the evening. At last there was something like peace and quiet established throughout the hotel.

I had been up very early in the morning. I had several letters to write before starting from Paris, and had been compelled to take several cross-country walks to curé's villas, leaving my carriage in the high road during the day.

Often had I lain awake night after night, pondering over my afflictions, unable to shake off the load of remorse that oppressed me. Then every now and then Nature would declare herself completely exhausted, and it would have been the most difficult thing in the world to have kept myself from sleeping.

So it was with me on this night. For many previous ones I had hardly closed my eyes at all. Now, as soon as the military disturbance was hushed, I fell fast asleep, and doubtless should have continued in that state for many hours, had I not been

suddenly disturbed in a most disagreeable and unexpected way.

I found a man standing by my bed-side, pulling me by the ear, and exclaiming, "Wake up, idle one, we shall be going without you,—you will be 'joliment' late, brigand that you are!"

I was at first so dead tired, that I did not wake up and see what was the matter, or listen to what was being said. I simply turned round and tried to slumber again. However, my visitor pulled so resolutely at my ear, and repeated his admonitory language so audibly, that I was at last thoroughly roused, and looked round.

I had never seen my friend in my life before! Nor he me! It was Achilles come to look up Hector, and had entered the wrong chamber. He apologised most sincerely when he discovered his mistake, and explained his error to me directly. But the mischief was done. I could not get to sleep again for the life of me. Tiresome soldiers! I wished them at Halifax—anywhere out of my hearing.

It was still extremely early when they took their departure. There was bugleing to an awful degree, and the call to arms could not but be heard all over the town before they were really gone.

I never remember passing a more uncomfortable night than I did at Mantes, and certainly never wish for such another. I felt, when I rose in the morning, quite unfitted for the day's duty before me. It was too late the afternoon before to take any step on arriving; but, knocked up as I felt myself, I determined not to leave the town till I had ascertained whether or not Mantes had been the scene of my poor wife's misery.

Immediately after breakfast I sallied forth into the street, and happening to see a priest just in front of me, in the act of entering what I rightly concluded his own door, I overtook him, and asked the liberty of a few words with him.

"Come in, come," said he, looking at me from head to foot in the most matter-of-fact way, and as if he were endeavouring to guess what I could be wanting with him.

I accepted his invitation, and followed him into the house.

"Now then, Monsieur," he began, as soon as he had got me into his room, "what can I do for you?" and again he stared as if he would look through me.

I made that oft-repeated statement and inquiry.

"Ah! ah!" exclaimed the priest, rubbing his hands together as soon as I had done speaking. "Nothing of the sort has happened here; but as you are apparently a foreigner, I daresay" (here he hesitated, and went cautiously forward), "we . . . might manage . . . it . . . for . . . you" (hemming and hawing) "for a consideration."

I was at a loss to understand his meaning, and half feared he must be out of his senses.

"I beg pardon," I observed; "I do not quite comprehend your last proposal."

"Come, come," he replied, jerking his head on one side, "let us understand each other. I think I may say that I understand you, and I have only to add that if you really want my assistance, and

are prepared to pay for it, why, I" . . . (humming and hawing again) "I am your man."

I didn't half like this off-hand proposition of becoming my property, but he might know something. So I answered him, that if he could give me the only assistance I required, he should be well paid.

"Ah, that's something like business," he exclaimed; "but still if you won't go straight to the point, shall I do it for you?"

"What an extraordinary man!" I thought; "what can he be driving at?" I begged him to go as straight as he liked, and to delay no longer in speaking out, assuring him that he might rely upon me.

"Well, then, young man," he continued, "I think I understand your game. It is very important to you to get authentic information that your wife is dead. Is it not so?"

"It is," I replied.

"Very well," said he, "I understand you" (and he began to look more knowing and cunning than

he had yet done), "you want to prove that your wife is dead. She may be or she may not; but if you will give me five hundred francs, I am prepared to swear that she died here, and that I buried her; and then, probably, you will be able to gain your point, and get her fortune—am I right, young man?"

Long before the villain had got to the end of his speech, I had begun meditating in my mind what I should do with him. Should I rush forward and knock him down? No, that was a course the French law would probably teach me did not pay for adopting. Should I make use of the strongest French language that I knew, and insinuate that he was a villain? No. A moment's calm reflection told me that this also might be expensive. I did what I believe was the most sensible thing I could have done; which was, to bid him good morning and take my departure.

Having met with nothing but disagreeables, it is not to be wondered at that I was anxious to leave the unpleasant town of Mantes. Directly I

returned to the hotel, I rang the bell and ordered my bill and my carriage. The former was speedily brought up. As I was paying it, the waiter, who was very much more inclined to be talkative than he had been the day before, when he had had so many valiant defenders of his country to look after, said—

"I hope that Monsieur has seen the grand picture," he observed to me.

"What grand picture?" I asked.

"Ah, it seems Monsieur has not seen it," he continued. "It belongs to Monsieur Renard, and he shows it to everybody; he is very proud of it."

"What is the subject?" I demanded.

"Ah, it is very pretty," he replied. "They call it a Venus; and Monsieur Renard pretends it is by Titian, but *entre nous*, it is the work of a butcher's son at Mantes, and Monsieur Renard bought it at an auction-room years back."

I always liked to see everything that was to be seen at every place I stopped, if it were possible, particularly pictures; but if the waiter was right,

this one was scarce worth seeing, although a reputed Titian.

As I was going downstairs, on my way to my carriage, who should I meet on the first floor landing but Monsieur Renard himself. He began bowing and twitching, and blinking and scraping, in his usual way; but then he had nobody else left in the hotel now to claim his affability. The officers were all gone. I was the only guest, and he determined to make the most of me.

"I hope that you are not" (left leg drawn up) "really going to leave us so soon, Monsieur" (blink, blink, blink.)

I told him that I was on the point of departure.

"Oh, I am dreadfully sorry," and with his right arm he dealt himself a fearful blow on the chest, which all-but knocked him backwards.

"I hear," said I, "that you have a valuable picture in the hotel. I am so sorry that I have not seen it."

"Ah, I am also very sorry," he replied (and the legs and arms and eyes worked away in a most in-

dustrious way.) "I should have had great pleasure" (here his chin went suddenly round where the nape of his neck ought to have been) "in showing you my picture, but unfortunately" (blink, blink, blink) "my wife has got a cold, and is in bed in the room where the picture is." (Another all but fatal blow on the chest from the same arm).

There was a door left slightly open close to the spot where we were standing conversing. No sooner had Monsieur Renard finished his last sentence, than a female's voice was distinctly heard calling out, "Oh, but the gentleman can come in and see the picture if he will only promise faithfully not to look towards the bed where I am."

"Ah, that's very amiable, indeed," I remarked, turning towards Monsieur Renard.

He looked stern as a mastiff, then suddenly exerting an irresistible influence over that of the St. Vitus's dance, he became perfectly steady, and in the most serious way addressed me thus—

"If Monsieur goes in to see the picture, he must promise faithfully, otherwise," he con-

tinued, drawing himself up as high as he could, "he will have to answer before me!!"

I promised to act as he stipulated, whereupon he opened the door and let himself backwards into the room, followed by myself, upon whom he kept the strictest watch, lest my eyes should wander on to forbidden ground.

I had the opportunity of seeing the wonderful picture, which I did not think wonderful at all; and even if I had, this was really such a case of sight-seeing under difficulties (for Monsieur Renard looked so fierce all the time it lasted), that it was quite a relief when it was over. But the control that he had exercised over his contortions during the interval this very private view lasted, was not destined to continue. No sooner had we quitted the room, than the unruly legs, vicious arms, electric eyes, and twisted chin, began vieing with each other as to which should be most refractory. Which of them, however, gained the mastery, I am unable to say; for on seeing, directly I quitted the dangerous room, that he was again set agoing, I wished him

as hasty a good morning as I could, proceeded downstairs, and was quickly safe in my carriage.

I omitted to mention in a previous chapter that, during the short time I was at Boulogne, I observed a man, whom I met walking slowly along the street, caressing his moustache. Not that there was anything peculiar in this, because you see so many men doing the same thing, but I could not help remembering that I had noticed that man doing the same thing at Clermont, where the reader may remember I passed the first night after quitting Paris the first time. I also saw him at Arras, and then afterwards at Calais. When I again came across him at Boulogne, I must confess I felt somewhat surprised, perhaps a little uneasy, which was rather foolish. He was probably only a commercial man from Paris, going round the country, and stopping at these towns, where he was in the habit of taking orders, or transacting business.

Curiously enough, on my return to Paris the first time, I met the man again in the street. He

was dressed in black, and, judging from his sharp black eye, moustache, the way he wore his hair, and by the entire cut of his jib, there was no doubt that he was a Frenchman. He never seemed to take any notice of me, and I didn't know whether he remembered me again each time we met.

While travelling on the Continent, it is, as everybody knows, such a common thing to be continually meeting the same people. If you cross over, in the month of July or August, from Dover to Calais, or Folkestone to Boulogne, with a view of taking a tour through Switzerland, or doing the Rhine, or any other route favoured by Englishmen in the way these two are travelled especially, ten to one but that several of those who crossed over with you in the steamboat will stumble across you fifty times in the course of your wanderings, either on the top of the Rigi, in the valley of the Rhone, on the lake of Geneva, at Mayence, Wiesbaden, or some such place.

One thinks nothing of it, and while journeying in

France it is such a common thing to meet shoals of travellers in all the provincial towns, going about for the good of the commercial houses they belong to, that I thought there was nothing very strange in my continually coming across my friend as I had done.

I had often met these sort of men, and frequently got into conversation with some of them whom I had found very sociable and full of information. Living as they appeared to do on locomotion, they were glad to meet people inclined to talk, as a Frenchman generally is if you take him whilst he is in the humour, or go the right way to work; but, as they seldom begin to talk to you first, people are apt to imagine that they are little disposed to fraternise.

From Mantes I journeyed slowly on from village to village, with no success, till I came to Rouen, where, in order to do my duty thoroughly, I had to stay three or four days. There were priests here without end, and I did not feel satisfied that I had devoted sufficient time and trouble to so im-

portant a place till I had visited at least the greater part of them.

I gathered not the smallest tittle of information between Rouen and Havre, nor can I report any advantage gained from making the journey I did from the latter place to Dieppe, or from there back by a different route to Rouen. It seemed as if the further I went, the more distant I was from discovery.

I had now carefully searched every likely spot on or near to the two principal routes from England to France. Where should I turn my footsteps next? Where should I re-commence seeking for the dead amongst the living? I knew not! There were times when I had lost all hope. Sometimes I doubted the event having really taken place as it was shown, choosing rather to regard it as one of those unfathomable mysteries that defy the resources of man, which time alone can bring to light; but then a voice would whisper to me—"Persevere! persevere!" Suddenly my energy would acquire fresh strength. In a moment I had

ceased to waver, and my old resolution was once more firmly in the ascendant.

CHAPTER VI.

"Oh, hateful error, melancholy's child;
Why dost thou show to the apt thoughts of men
The things that are not?"

SHAKESPEARE.

IN spite of my resolution, I cannot say that I returned to Paris with unabated confidence in the future. They say, "Sperat infestis bene preparatum pectus." I suppose I ought to have been "prepared" to hope through every difficulty when I first commenced my task, and to have confidence even when my chance of success looked hopeless.

There was, it is true, one contingency that I was still sanguine enough to look forward to, as I drew near to the termination of my wanderings, and

that was, that I might possibly find letters which would throw some light upon the darkness I had unsuccessfully for many weeks been endeavouring to penetrate. But on my arrival in the French capital, this ray of hope proved to be delusive. All I found was another communication from Mr. Rivers, giving no sort of information respecting her who was so mysteriously lost; but one part of his letter I could not help reading with much pain. The loss he had sustained had had so serious an effect upon him that he had been unable to leave his room for the last month.

"I fear," he wrote, "that I shall never be again what I was. It may please God to restore me some portion of my former good health, but I feel that the blow which this terrible bereavement has been to me, I can never hope to get over. Heaven only knows the love I felt for that dear child. She was my only pride. What are riches, and all the worldly advantage with which I am surrounded, now that I am to see her no more? I cannot tear her memory from my mind.

"Your reply to my first letter was the painful extinction of my last hope. I loved to delude myself into believing that you might still be able to contradict the statement which I had received anonymously, though I could hardly imagine that any one could have been unfeeling enough to torture a parent by announcing the death of his child, when such was not the case. I wish that I could take some step to ascertain all the particulars. It grieves me more than I can say to be compelled, by bodily affliction, to remain inactive.

"For the sake of your poor wife's parents, Mr. Carlton, I entreat you, leave no stone unturned to explain this mystery. Spare no expense. I will pay anything, even to the half of my fortune, to arrive at the truth, even though this should be worse than we can imagine.

"Day after day I watch for the arrival of the post with childish impatience, ever hoping that I may find a letter from you, to tell me that you have found her—that she is yet alive. Let me know, I repeat, the worst; do not scruple to tell

me all, however heartrending it may be, as soon as you have learnt it. Pray write soon."

Alas! I seemed destined to bring trouble upon all those with whom I came in contact. How Mr. Rivers must now be regretting the day when his daughter first made my acquaintance! What good cause Lady Strafford had for repenting the moment when I was first presented to her!

The only memorable act to which I could look back in my past life, was my rescue of Clara Hindley. I had proved myself a sort of *bête noire* to everyone I met. Had it not been for me, poor Rosie Acton would never have broken her arm. I could not disguise from myself that I had been a great cause of trouble to my own father. Even in the fair Middleton's eyes, I must be regarded as an unprofitable acquaintance. There was only poor André, my coachman, who, I believe, really liked me; but while in his dormant state, proceeding along some narrow lane, on hillocks covered with wild herbage (for I sometimes made him take such rugged by-roads, if they happened to

lead to priests' houses, or cemeteries) he might be jerked out upon the hard dry turf, and so get a blow from which he might never recover.

I found a short note from Alphonse Mercier, affording me no real information; but I could see, from the contents, that he had been giving himself much trouble in my behalf. He mentioned to me that he had heard from his friends, who were related to the Bishop of Rheims, that that personage was just come to Paris, and thinking that he might be able to give me some assistance, he very kindly gave me a letter of introduction.

I determined to avail myself of it, and although I happened to know that this prelate was not well-disposed to the existing government of France, I thought that if I could get his written sanction, it might be a means of making more amiable such of the priesthood as had the power to assist me.

The only other letter was from my father, to whom I had written as soon as I was capable of directing a pen. He expressed himself as dreadfully grieved at what had taken place, but

much relieved on hearing from me. He informed me that the sensation which my duel had caused had already nearly subsided; and that owing to Sir Francis Strafford and his friends having a great deal of influence with the government, the matter had been hushed up as much as possible; adding, that there was no probability of my being arrested upon the charge of manslaughter, or anything of that kind. The seconds had been called upon to give an account of the transaction; both agreed entirely in their evidence, and it was generally understood that no further steps would be taken.

My father was ignorant of my wife's death. I lost no time in making him fully acquainted with the state of the case, and of my present enterprise.

Having explored the two great northern routes, I was at a loss in which direction now to turn my attention. After consulting the map, and calculating every chance, I came to the conclusion that the best thing I could do would be still to bear

towards the east, and, leaving Paris, to make a circuit, of which the following was the programme:

From Paris consecutively, to Evreux, Lisieux, Caen, Bayeau, Coutances, Avranches, Dinan, Reames, Laval, Alençon, Chartres. This was an undertaking which would occupy me six weeks or two months, if I hurried ever so fast through it; but I determined to perform this journey more leisurely than its predecessors.

It was out of the beaten track of travellers; moreover, the route was completely unknown to me, unlike those I had already taken, every step of which I seemed conversant with, from having so often journeyed by them.

Having made up my mind to carry out my project, it was of little use to think of doing it by halves. My search was now about to be extended over a large tract of land, and would take in a vast number of towns accessible to anyone who might have selected the Southampton, Jersey, and St. Malo line of packets from England; consequently

I thought there was a greater chance of success to be expected from this tour than from any subsequent one I might take in hand. It included a considerable tract of land, but a mere nothing compared to the rest of France. The truth-telling map indicated a space it seemed idle to expect one could ever hope thoroughly to explore!

Some of the distant parts in the far west, and towards the south, I could not help seeing it would be folly attempting, even if unsuccessful everywhere else, for the simple reason that it would have been impossible for my wife to have travelled so far in the short space of time that must have elapsed from her departure from home to the time when the information reached England that she had died.

I was sorry to find, on informing André of my next proposed tour, that he would be unable to be at my service for three or four days. His horses, he declared, were in want of rest. I had in my last journey been too hard upon them, and they had been decidedly overworked. In three or four

days, however, he thought that they would be ready to proceed.

I was perfectly contented with André, who I sometimes fancied, in his own particular way, entered thoroughly into the spirit of my enterprise; sometimes indeed he seemed quite excited as we approached fresh towns and villages, which he thought likely to be productive of information—in fact I believe he took quite an interest in the search that I was prosecuting with such ardour.

I determined, therefore, to wait till his horses were fit to start upon this extensive tour, and in the meantime go and find out if the Bishop of Rheims was still in Paris, and also read up all the guide books descriptive of the country in which I was about to travel.

Having finished writing my letters, I sallied forth one afternoon, and went on foot to the Hôtel Louvois, the address of the reverend prelate. He had not yet left Paris, moreover he was at home and disengaged. I presented myself and my letter of introduction to him, and found him very civil

indeed; and although he had not heard of any event like the one I described as having occurred in his diocese—upon the hope of which I had certainly not much counted—yet he very good-naturedly gave me the written authority to take every reasonable step calculated to aid my discovery, and requested and required all ministers of the church within his jurisdiction to give me all the information in their power which might conduce to the success of my undertaking.

He seemed a good-hearted man, sympathised sincerely with me when I revealed my story to him, and though rather suspicious at first as to the object of my visit, yet when he had seen the letter I brought for him, his manner altered directly, and the reserve with which he grected me disappeared at once.

I could not help thinking, also, that he looked rather nervous when I entered his room, giving me a most searching look, as if he was not altogether satisfied with my appearance; and I was quick enough to see, as I came in, that he was

thrusting into his breast-pocket some paper or papers that he evidently wished to conceal; but this didn't concern me.

On leaving the Hôtel, I went up the Rue Richelieu, and strolled listlessly along the Boulevard. I was, however, totally regardless of the continuous string of pedestrians and carriages passing and repassing; in fact, not knowing why I was there at all, where I was now so thoroughly out of place, only I suppose I was unaccountably drawn there by the magnetic influence of that fashionable pavement which in days gone by used to lure me to it, as it did apparently everybody; and now, though my thoughts were far away, I found myself unconsciously wandering up the broad highway so much patronised by loungers and visitors.

I had not advanced very many paces along the Boulevard des Italiens, when I felt myself suddenly touched upon the shoulder in an ominous way. I looked round, and saw the sternest of gendarme close to my right elbow, and on the other side of me, in most disagreeable proximity,

who should I see but the ubiquitous individual whom I had met at Clermont, Arras, Boulogne, &c.

Before I had been permitted a moment to collect my thoughts, or ask a question, feeling that to make any resistance would be madness, I was forced on one side, and compelled to enter a fiacre, to the driver of which I had the satisfactory pleasure of hearing the gendarmes say, "To the Prefecture!"

All my questions as we drove along as to why I had been arrested, what I was accused of having done, were met with a determined silence on the part of my captors. When I entreated for some sort of explanation, the only notice taken of my appeal was a shake of the head from one or other of the two men, significative that my curiosity would not be satisfied.

I felt dreadfully uneasy as to my situation, I must admit, knowing as I did the unceremonious way people were often hurried off to this dreaded prison, the very name of which was to me suggestive of the rack and torture, although I knew per-

fectly well that I was innocent of any conspiracy, or offence of any kind. It would be superfluous for me to bring forward examples of cases of poor wretches who had been carried away before me, falsely suspected, and then unjustly and cruelly punished for crimes in which they had had no participation.

I always had had a horror of getting into disturbances of any kind in France, and had always carefully avoided language that might be deemed seditious. It is true that the Bastile was destroyed, and state prisoners were now no longer guillotined unheard; still I could not help feeling that my position was not pleasant, and I was far from comfortable, unable as I was to see through the mystery of my arrest.

On arriving at the outer gate of the Prefecture, the fiacre was brought to a stand-still, and I alighted in company with my two attendants. Of course the fact of a gendarme alighting from a vehicle with a prisoner was the signal for all the idlers and the curious to rush forward, and catch a

glimpse, if possible, of the offender. Before we had time to pass through the gate, a crowd of at least twenty people had collected on the pavement, looking on me, perhaps, as the inventor of a new infernal machine, or some such daring enterprise which the vigilance of the police had prevented.

I was conveyed through the large court intervening between the outer gate and that part of the building appropriated to the detention of prisoners. After passing through a long corridor, and ascending several steep flights of steps, we arrived at a door, at which the gendarme knocked, and it was opened from within. I was shown the way to enter by an official wave of the hand in the direction of the door on the part of my uniformed friend.

Advancing into the room, I found myself in the presence of two extremely disagreeable-looking men, in a sort of semi-uniform, smoking dirty pipes. They immediately saluted me, and informed me that I must undergo the process of being searched,

and that any paper found upon me must be detained. Knowing it was useless to offer any resistance, I put myself at the disposal of these gentlemen, and thinking that possibly by displaying a readiness to show them the only articles I had that could be called "papers"—namely, two or three letters, one of introduction to the Bishop from Alphonse Mercier, and that one which the Bishop had given me at my request,—I should be adopting the plan most likely to disarm suspicion, and convince them that some error had been made in my apprehension, I, of my own accord, gave up to them immediately all the manuscript matter I had about me.

They directly unfolded and examined them. Those which were from England, and of course written in English, they evidently did not understand, but I believe that that was just the reason why they suspected them to be particularly full of some dangerous or impeachable matter. They seemed to handle these poor innocent epistles as cautiously as if they expected that there must be a

something unusually combustible about the paper they were written on, or as if there was danger of their suddenly decomposing and turning to fulminating powder, if touched too carelessly. But when they came to the two letters I have just mentioned, from Alphonse Mercier, and read their contents, they seemed as if a sudden light had burst upon them. They were handed from one to the other, backwards and forwards.

One drew the attention of the other eagerly to some particular sentence that he seemed to consider important; looks were interchanged, the meaning of which, one suffering so much under mental obscurity as I was, could not in the least comprehend. A dumb show of emotion worked over their countenances, as they seemed to be enlightened, or to receive confirmation of something suspected, which some sentence or other in the letter revealed or cleared up; and after for a long time conversing in an under-tone together, and pointing out particular passages in these letters to each other, that seemed either to take their fancy

or displease them more than the rest, one of them, turning towards me, informed me that I must be remanded till the next day.

I begged them in the most civil way to explain to me the cause of my capture, and the charge laid against me. They shrugged their shoulders, and compressed their lips, and looked as severe as a pair of Catos, but all I could get from them was,

"Monsieur, we are not authorised to answer any questions."

There was nothing to be done but do as I was told, and go where they chose to put me.

The predicament I was in, was, to say the least of it, annoying. What could this detention mean? I saw before me a vision of black bread, unfiltered Seine water, and a loathsome cell, which I was determined to make every attempt to avoid. I begged to inform them that some mistake, I felt sure, had been made; that I was certain, should they ask me half a dozen questions, they would see that they had committed some error which I was posi-

tive their politeness and sense of justice would immediately lead them to rectify.

I then mentioned to them that I had made preparations to leave Paris the next day on important business, and that I should feel extremely obliged by their dealing with my case at once, instead of delaying it till to-morrow. I declared that I was an innocent man, whatever might be the accusation upon which I had been arrested, that I could confidently refer them to the British ambassador, and that I had no doubt of being able to prove to their satisfaction that I could not be the person they doubtless mistook me for.

I might as well have saved myself the trouble of my statement. I could get nothing out of those taciturn officials. They remained as silent as the benches on which they sat—at least so far as granting my request went. They seemed, however, to listen most attentively to all I said, and shrugged their shoulders when I had done, letting me infer what I like from that performance.

Having whispered together for some minutes

after I had done speaking, and then writing something on a piece of paper, the spokesman of the twain presenting me with it, addressed me most politely, thus:

"Monsieur, we have the honour of presenting you with an order to one of the best cells, and shall have the pleasure of seeing you to-morrow."

They then both rose, and bowed to me most obsequiously.

I was about to take advantage of the civility, and try the effect of a few more words, but on my commencing to speak, both rose again, and began doing such forced obeisance, and looking so significantly at the door, that no gesture ever yet indicated more intelligibly "the way out."

At the door I found my friend the gendarme, who held his hand out immediately for the order which he saw in mine. On perceiving the distinction which had been confirmed upon me, namely, a dry cell instead of a damp one, a sort of distant civility characterised his behaviour to-

wards me, for instead of commanding me to follow him, he only begged me to do so, and on the strength of my having been considered too superior for an underground lodging, he actually "monsieured" me.

At about five o'clock in the afternoon I found myself located in the most wretched and confined enclosure that it had ever been my lot to enter. Four walls, a narrow barred-up casement, and an iron doorway are comfortless-looking things at the best of times, but when the only furniture in the space which they enclose is a wooden stool and a straw mattress, they look ten times more alarming. In this miserable place I had to make up my mind to remain till the next day. And how much longer! Since I was to be confined unjustly one night, perhaps I should have to remain there many more!

In order to kill the time, I amused myself with looking round the cell, and trying to decipher some of the many memoranda left upon the walls by prisoners who had occupied this place before me.

There was "Jean Jacques. I have existed here fifteen years," on one wall. On another I made out the following words: "I am dying. If this meets the eye of some prisoner lodged here after me, who wishes to put an end to his captivity as I have done, let him raise the large knot in the middle of the floor, which is loose, and he will find some white powder, which will cause death. It is my only property, and I leave it for the good of future comers, who may, like myself, have lost all hope of gaining liberty.—Signed, G. R."

It required the most minute examination to make out this paragraph. It must have been scratched many years ago by some sharp instrument, and though the letters were all well-formed, they were many of them so filled up with dust, I had to blow it away before it was possible to read it. Having managed to decipher the whole of the announcement, curiosity prompted me to look for the knot alluded to. I had no difficulty in finding it, and, sticking in a pin, lifted it out of the board. There was the powder, sure enough, underneath it, only

instead of its being white, it had become quite brown, probably owing to the length of time it had been concealed.

At about seven o'clock I received a visit from a turnkey, who brought me some bread and water, and offered to get me a bottle of wine, or anything I fancied in moderation. I took advantage of the offer, and sent for something more substantial than the provisions he had procured me. Being weary of the excitement of the day, I tried to go to sleep early, but it was not so easy to do so as I thought. Sleeping on straw is not agreeable when you are unaccustomed to it, and I could not entirely forget that I was in a prison. Then I thought of writing to the British Ambassador; but how to procure pens, ink, and paper, and a messenger? I thought of the turnkey, who again made his appearance, to know at what hour I should like my breakfast.

"I have a word to say to you, my friend," said I, addressing him in his own language. "I know you would scorn to commit any action for money

that you felt was incompatible with your duty as turnkey."

My friend shrugged up his shoulders, and replied:

"You do me justice."

"Yet," I continued, "if I could prevail upon you to cause a few lines to be delivered to our Ambassador, a hundred francs shall be your reward."

"Impossible," responded the man, "impossible. And yet," he added, when discretion came to his aid, "monsieur may write, and perhaps I may receive permission to forward his letter."

I lost no time in taking the hint, scribbled a few lines to the representative of England, and handed it over to the turnkey.

"I trust to your honour," he said.

"You may, implicitly," I replied, and he took his leave.

Elated with hope, I soon fell asleep, and was awoke at seven o'clock by the jingle of a bunch of keys. In a state of fear and anxiety, I awaited

his approach. The letter has been delivered, and I am again summoned to appear before the officials.

The turnkey entered, and requested me to follow him. I did so. He led the way till we arrived at the door of the room where I had been searched the day before. I was ordered to come in. There were the same two silent beings of the day before, smoking the same pipes, and sitting in the same chairs, looking as if they had been doing so ever since.

I received a bow from each of them, and returned it. One of them got up and took from a drawer the letters which had been taken from me the day before. He then sat down again, and I was about to be cross-examined, when a knock at the door interrupted proceedings. Permission to enter having been given in the gruffest voice my persecutors could command, the door was thrown open, and in walked no less a personage than the British Ambassador. Making himself known to the two officials, he proceeded to inquire on what charge I had been arrested.

Here was a plain question, that required a plain answer. But it did not get one. I was ordered to quit the room for a few minutes, which I did, finding some one outside kind enough to take charge of me. Presently I was recalled, and the spokesman of the two officials, rising from his seat, informed me, in a most civil manner, that I was free.

And now, reader, I trust you will allow me to tell you what it was that had led to my being arrested. It seems that that diabolical doctor who attended me in my illness, when he found that Miss Middleton had suddenly taken her departure, fearing lest I should do the same some fine morning, without paying him his bill, ordered a man who sometimes acted in the capacity of government spy, and at others as watchman in the pay of private individuals, over the proceedings of other private individuals, to keep an eye upon me. Like all French spies, he did not require twice telling, and when the doctor received his money from me, he omitted to settle with the watchman. Con-

sequently he never left me,and when I quitted Paris, he followed on my track. The individual in question was the same man whose ubiquity had before this so astonished me, as the reader may remember, the same man whom I met at Clermont, at Arras, Calais, Boulogne, and Paris; and having dogged my footsteps, and discovered that my business was to go round the country and hold conversation with all the priests of any importance as I travelled along, he looked upon a case against me as half established. When he heard me at the door of the Hôtel Louvin (for he was close behind me, it seems, as I arrived there) inquire for the Bishop of Rheims, a known intriguer against the Government, his suspicions that I was a dangerous person, occupied in exciting the clergy of the country to exercise their influence over the people, and stir up another revolution, were confirmed.

Thus it was in consequence of this visit that I was arrested; and this was the reason why the letter of recommendation from the Bishop of Rheims was considered—as I imagined it seemed at the

time, though I could not understand why—such strong evidence against me.

But the spy found, much to his disgust, that he had made a great mistake. When he could put the Government on the scent of some notorious conspirator, or detect for them some deep-laid plot, he was well rewarded, and all his expenses paid; but of course since his business was speculative, sometimes, as in my case, he was unsuccessful. When I was released, he was compelled to pay all expenses, and was told to be more careful in future, a hint from which, for his own sake, he did not fail to profit.

But he had enjoyed some good things in his time, and had no reason to complain of Fortune. Often had he been set by jealous husbands to watch suspected wives, and his success had been great in that branch of business. No man was sharper in comprehending the meaning of the smiles or looks of the suspected parties when they met, and he flattered himself he could tell at a glance whether there was "anything in it" or not.

But the cleverest people sometimes overreach themselves, as he did in my case. He was open to an engagement with anyone who paid him well. One day he would be in the employ of a lady who wished to know how her husband passed his days when out of her sight. Sometimes he would be engaged to ferret out the whereabouts of a young lady who had run away or eloped. To-day he would be on the track of a thief, in the pay of his country; to-morrow he would be on the look-out for some truant *danseuse* in the pay of a Lothario. Now he would be searching in the meanest disguise about the Faubourg St. Antoine for a stolen dog; the day after, he would be acting for a creditor, and dogging some titled debtor in the Quartier St. Germain. In fact, he was always after somebody or other, and once put upon a scent, he would hunt it as true as a rabbit beagle, inevitably sooner or later running into it.

Having explained everything to my judges, who had been already assured by the British Ambassador, when I was sent out of the room, that I was

an Englishman he could answer for, and by no means likely to mix myself up in foreign politics which did not concern me, I had my letters handed to me, and left the Prefecture; not, however, till I had had a few minutes interview with the British Ambassador alone, in order to thank him for so kindly coming to my assistance.

His Excellency told me he should not have dreamt of doing so had he not received my letter to say that I had been arrested, and that I was in need of his assistance. Without the turnkey's kindness I might have stayed where I was for months. Unfortunately, from having been so long abroad, I spoke better French than the general run of Englishmen, and should have had great difficulty in convincing my judges that I was not using a feigned name and a false passport; and knowing, as I did, that there is nothing Frenchmen hate so much as to own that they are in the wrong, after believing themselves for a long time in the right, I am sure that it would have been no easy matter to have emancipated myself.

CHAPTER VII.

"His inward pains increase,
All means are us'd."

DRYDEN.

LADY STRAFFORD was alone. She sat very upright in her well-cushioned chair, dressed with her usual attention, apparently reading a devotional book. It was Sherlock "On Death." But the Bishop's solemn reflections on the most solemn of subjects did not engage her attention exclusively. The volume lay open on her lap, where the handsome binding could sustain no injury from the rich dark moire antique, on the soft swelling skirts of which it rested.

Her countenance was grave—indeed painfully

serious. The clear complexion that had distinguished her fine features, had become sallow; the cheerful expression, anxious and sad. But she thoroughly maintained the dignity on which she had prided herself, and kept up, with the same care, her sense of propriety. She had suffered in no ordinary degree. Long watching, protracted anxiety, continued apprehensions, had been endured day after day, and night after night, and signs of exhaustion had become evident.

Ordinary women must have succumbed under so terrible a trial. Lady Strafford, however, believed that she was not an ordinary woman, and was desirous that the world should believe so. Her social rank, and this she never forgot, had claims upon her which she felt bound to uphold. Common natures might naturally give way under the severe affliction that had overtaken her, but she must not give way. Hers was not a common nature. Therefore she maintained a dignified appearance, though the evidence of great physical suffering was daily becoming more conspicuous in her look and person.

Her husband still survived; but his life continued to hang as it were upon the feeblest of threads. It could scarcely be said that he lived; and yet he did not die. He remained on this extreme verge of existence, with the possibility that the next moment would be his last.

Nothing could be more trying to the watcher than this critical state; each succeeding day being as hazardous as the past, and the congratulations that accompanied its conclusion without any change for the worse, being always largely mingled with fears for the coming morrow.

For there could be but one change for the worse. Of that she was convinced, notwithstanding the untiring attention of those associated with her in the anxious watching, that the truth should be concealed from her. The surgeons talked hopefully, the nurse endeavoured to look sanguine, but a glance at the features of the wounded man put to flight their kindly intentions. Lady Strafford was as well aware of her husband's danger as his professional attendants.

Not the slightest sign of improvement had been manifested. That the patient lived, was all the doctors could ascertain, and though they dwelt strongly on the aphorism so familiar in the sick-room in similar obstinate cases, that where there is life there is hope, this was only for the ear of the afflicted lady. From each other they did not conceal their alarm. Everything had been done that skill could suggest; but a fatal termination seemed inevitable.

On the previous day they had suggested to Lady Strafford their desire to benefit by the great experience of a gentleman of high scientific attainments, allowed to be at the summit of his profession. To this she acceded readily, but without exhibiting anything like hope. She had ceased to hope. She had been endeavouring to resign herself to the dread inevitable; and after another sleepless weary night, had finished her toilet with that sense of justice to herself, and attention to what her position demanded of her, which dominated over her feelings, and with Sherlock on Death, to

show that she was resigned to her fate—was waiting in her sitting-room the arrival of the most famous of modern English surgeons.

She had made up her mind that she was to be a widow. The change was anything but agreeable to her, many things combined to render it unpleasant; and on these features in the melancholy prospect, Lady Strafford had fixed her attention, instead of confining it to the momentous theme on which Dr. Sherlock had founded his celebrated discourse.

This was the sole reason why the well-bound volume lay unnoticed on the handsome robe—for Lady Strafford was too religious a woman, that is, too fashionably religious a woman, to neglect so high an authority on religious conduct, had there been any of her friends present. To be sure, she had only the companionship of her own thoughts, and in these she was too much absorbed to be conscious of her impropriety.

The rattle of carriage-wheels, followed by a peal from the house-bell, mingled with the scarcely-

audible noise of the muffled knocker, startled her out of her uncomfortable reverie. In a moment the future was forgotten for the present. Lady Strafford knew too well what she ought to be doing, when a person so well known in the best society as the President of the Royal College of Surgeons should be presented to her. She glanced in the direction of the magnificent mirror opposite, and her mind was relieved of all personal anxiety when she saw that her hair had not been in the slightest degree disturbed since she had left her dressing-room, and that there was nothing to alter in the set of her gown.

It was true she could not help noticing that she did not look so well as she had done before this terrible event had happened, but she only sighed. There was no help for it. Such a course of suffering as she had been called upon to endure would have set cosmetics at defiance, had her ladyship been inclined to employ them, which I am happy to say she was not.

All that Lady Strafford did was to raise the well-

bound volume from its sort resting-place, and direct her eyes to the page that had remained open. In a thoroughly lady-like attitude, and with an irreproachable demeanour, her ladyship attempted to read a few sentences of the very appropriate work she had selected—whether for instruction or consolation, or because she thought it creditable to her sense of propriety that she should be found so occupied, I have not been able to ascertain.

The door opened softly by the sympathising footman, who, advancing towards his mistress, in a subdued voice announced her visitor. Sir —— was a man of gentlemanly presence, and an accomplished man of the world, quite as much as an oracle in the most difficult surgical cases. He was as familiar with courts as he had been with hospitals, and knew quite as well how to win golden opinions from the friends of his patients, as to express them to the less celebrated members of his profession who sought him in consultation.

He was accompanied by the gentleman who had been engaged by Sir —— to accompany him to the

place of meeting—a retired naval surgeon, whose rough exterior, florid complexion, and somewhat blunt manners, contrasted strangely with the graceful ease and studied courtesy of the court surgeon.

A third member of the profession entered the room with them—an elegant man, dressed with such scrupulous neatness and precision, having a fine head of light hair, parted in the centre, so as to give him much the air of a fashionable curate. He was the family physician, but as Dr. Claridge's experience in the treatment of shot-wounds was of so very limited a character as to afford him no confidence whatever, he had been quite content to leave the treatment of the difficult case to a contemporary who had enjoyed the advantage of thirty years service in an English man of war.

Dr. Claridge took upon himself the task of introducing his distinguished friend—as he thought proper to style him—to his patroness, which he did with elaborate solemnity. A rural Dean acting as master of the ceremonies in behalf of his

primate, could not have infused a more profound respect into the act.

Lady Strafford rose, quietly closed Dr. Sherlock's treatise, and placed it with becoming reverence on the adjoining table, made a faint attempt at a smile, and gracefully held out her hand. Sir —— gracefully accepted the social courtesy, as, with an intelligent glance he marked the signs of character he knew so well how to interpret.

He addressed her at once with a voice as pleasant as his manner. It was full of sympathy and consideration, and possessed a kindliness quite paternal. His appearance was venerable as well as polished —in short, it was impossible for Lady Strafford to be insensible of the fact that he was one of the most gentlemanlike men she had ever met.

As soon as he was satisfied that he had made this impression, Sir —— asked to see his patient. He did not make any fuss to suggest the value of his time. He did not condescend to parade the names and dignities that were waiting to receive

his advice. It was simply a professional instinct that made the skilful surgeon eager to see a case that had been described to him as one possessed of unusual features.

Dr. Jukes, who had kept a little in the background, now eagerly advanced towards the door of an adjoining room. His manners were too distinctly of the nautical type to recommend him to Lady Strafford, who found it as difficult to reconcile herself to his rough head of hair, as to his abrupt mode of address. She felt herself, however, under too great a load of obligation to him for his indefatigable attention to her husband, to neglect him, because he too evidently neglected himself.

She nodded kindly, as if in acquiescence of his movement, and with a hurried intimation that she hoped to see them again before they left the house —which, as their great colleague knew, was intended for himself—her ladyship returned to her well-bound book, and her nicely-cushioned seat.

The three gentlemen passed through a well-appointed dressing-room.

"Now, Sir ——," said Dr. Jukes, as he and his colleague were approaching a door at the further end of it, "I should be glad if you'd look particularly at the direction of the wound, I ought to know something of such cases—I've seen enough of 'em, and treated enough of 'em to enable me to know what I ought to do, but confound it, Sir ——, I never felt so bothered in my life. I can no more tell you where the infernal ball has gone than my lady could, or even the old woman who nurses him."

"My dear Dr. Jukes," replied the court surgeon, blandly, as he stopped for a few seconds, "there is not the slightest discredit in your getting bothered under such circumstances. Every one of us may be bothered—I should not wonder, now, if our friend, Dr. Claridge, has been bothered more or less at some period of his useful career?"

The President of the Royal College of Surgeons knew more of that gentleman's career than his

words implied. He knew the elegant gentleman's antecedents quite as well as he knew them himself, for he was aware that his diploma came from Giessen, and the only medical qualification he possessed was that of an apothecary.

"Oh! yes, Sir ——," replied the well-got-up family physician, promptly, "I have often been very much bothered, I assure you."

"I thought as much," was the suggestive reply.

Little Dr. Jukes stared hard at his distinguished colleague with a decided inclination to indulge in a laugh, but Sir ——, with a meaning smile, pointed to the door of the adjoining chamber, and the next minute the three were receiving the humble genuflexions of the respectable-looking matron who had been engaged to nurse their patient.

She withdrew from the side of the bed as the eminent surgeon advanced to take her place. Having thrown the curtains aside to obtain additional light, he stopped and gazed steadily on a blueish, pale, thin face that lay on the pillow. No one who had known the gay young baronet of

a month back, would have recognised him in the cadaverous countenance which was being scrutinized by the person then stooping over it.

Presently Sir —— lifted up one of the half-closed lids and examined the almost glassy eye beneath. The pulse was then felt. A minute later the bed-clothes were partly turned down, and the skilled ear placed over the region of the heart. Not the slightest sign of consciousness was shown by the wounded man during the examination—not a word was uttered by either of his medical attendants.

At a sign from Sir ——, Dr. Jukes proceeded to take off the bandages and dressings from the wound. His eminent colleague looking at the appearance it presented with an air of grave concern, then took a silver probe out of a small morocco case which he drew from his pocket, and quickly inserted it into the orifice, feeling with his finger all about the surrounding muscles.

He whispered a few words to Dr. Jukes, which seemed to surprise that gentleman exceedingly.

Indeed his florid face appeared to be glowing as with a red heat, and something resembling embarrassment appeared in its expression.

Dr. Claridge did not seem as if he desired to incur any responsibility, for he satisfied himself with making enquiries of the nurse at the further end of the room. As he had told her over and over again, he knew the case was a hopeless one from the beginning, and had refrained from interfering in the treatment, though he was very far from approving of it. It must terminate fatally, therefore the less he had to do with it the better.

Sir —— now gently turned the patient over, replaced the silver probe in the morocco case, and took thence a scalpel, a sharp-bladed instrument of a peculiar form. First feeling with the forefinger of his left hand along a depression of the surface approaching the vertebræ, he rapidly made an incision into the muscle till the knife was stopped by a hard substance. In a few moments later, the bullet was in his hand.

A few strips of sticking-plaster were quickly

bound over the incision, and the patient replaced in his former position. The accomplished operator now cleansed and dressed the original wound—Dr. Jukes continuing to stand still, apparently more bothered than ever he had been in the whole course of his thirty years naval service; this having been done, the skilful ear was once more placed over the region of the heart, but for a longer time than before.

When Sir —— raised his head and replaced the bed-clothes, there was something in his countenance totally different from the grave concern it expressed, when he became aware of the serious aspect of the case. The expression was so good-humoured, courteous, affable; exactly as it was when in the presence of Lady Strafford.

Before *he* left the sick-room, he addressed a few words to the nurse. They were not exclusively professional—belonged rather to those kindly courtesies, which made the great man so general a favourite with the humble attendants of his patients. Nevertheless he contrived to bring in one or two

valuable suggestions, that were sure to be carried out more carefully than directions given in a less agreeable form.

"I congratulate you, Dr. Jukes!" exclaimed the oracle of surgical science, as soon as the three doctors had closed the door of the sick-room behind them.

The little man appeared confused; even his better-dressed associate had an air of enquiry on his inexpressive countenance. Both looked to their superior for explanation; but the cordial voice was accompanied by a no less cordial smile, and the sincerity of the sentence they had heard could not be doubted.

"How you have contrived to keep your patient alive, till now, astonishes me," added the great man, with the same kindly and courteous manner. "In the hands of a less skilful practitioner, he must have died in a week, at the furthest."

The red face surmounted by the rough head of hair effected a sensible elevation. Dr. Jukes was proud of having such an opinion addressed to him,

by the first authority in the profession; particularly when for the last few minutes he had experienced a sensible humiliation, under the impression that he had committed a blunder.

Dr. Claridge raised his white chin in his whiter cravat, as if he also felt the compliment. Indeed, he was disposed to appropriate a fair share of it, oblivious of the care with which he had shrank from any responsibility during the progress of the critical case.

"Well, you see, my dear Sir ——," he replied, rubbing his delicate hands together with a smile of intense satisfaction, "we have left nothing undone that might help to preserve so valuable a life."

"Just so," said the court surgeon blandly; then addressing himself to Dr. Jukes, added, "there are very few surgeons capable of successfully treating a very difficult case like this, who have not seen active service in the army, or navy."

The family physician did not feel himself snubbed, he was on much too good terms with

himself to believe that any one whose praise was worth having could depreciate him. He rubbed his white hands again, and smiled; his mind evidently in perfect accordance with the idea just expressed, though he knew very well that he had never seen a gun-shot wound in his life.

"But I was bothered, Sir ——, about that infernal bullet," cried the little man, bluntly, scratching his rough head in an impulse of sheer vexation.

"My dear Dr. Jukes," replied the great man, laying his hand on the shoulder of his humble colleague, and gazing almost affectionately into his weather-beaten face, "in my opinion your treatment has almost effected a miracle; and if we should be enabled to pull Sir Francis through, it will be as much owing to the care you have hitherto taken of him, as to your having called me in at the very moment in which I could be of any use."

"Then you really think, Sir ——, that we may save him?" inquired Dr. Claridge, now fully sen-

sible of the credit which might accrue to him, should his patron recover.

The forbearance of the great man was severely taxed, but his court training made him equal to the emergency.

"Unless an unfavourable turn takes place," he replied, "a cure is probable. But the case demands the most watchful attention."

"Oh, I will see to all that," cried the family physician, with an apparent inclination to throw his naval colleague over, there and then.

"My friend, Dr. Jukes, I have reason to believe," said Sir ——, with the smallest possible expression of remonstrance, "has had the entire surgical treatment of this difficult case, and I have perfect confidence in his skill."

The rough, red face brightened up as this decision was pronounced, and the one with the more covetable complexion grew a shade darker.

"But that infernal bullet!" exclaimed the former, in a tone of dissatisfaction, either with the missile or with himself.

The great man laughed good-humouredly, and cited instances of bullets having exhibited the most erratic tendencies—they having been found exactly where no one ought to have looked for them.

The purchaser of the Giessen diploma could not draw upon his experience for similar anecdotes, but quite contentedly he referred to the lady's-maid of a Countess, who had swallowed a needle, which he had successfully extracted from her elbow.

Little Dr. Jukes remembered, when he served on board the *Thunderer* in the late war, a man who had been shot in the jaw, and whom he had attended in hospital, came to him with a tumour on the back of his neck, on opening which he extracted the very identical shot that had so severely punished him when assisting in boarding an enemy of superior force, seven years before.

The three doctors became social as they became anecdotal; but presently the business of the consultation was proceeded with, and the oracle clearly

explained the features of the case on which his opinion had been sought, and gave his reasons for anticipating a successful result, provided certain changes which he suggested were made in the diet.

Just as everything had been arranged, the nurse rushed into the room, with a very excited countenance, and announced that the patient had exhibited signs of returning consciousness. This brought the doctors again to the bedside; but their stay was brief. Sir —— satisfied himself that the case was taking the turn he had anticipated, and led the way back to the sitting-room.

Here Lady Strafford was found occupying the same seat, with exactly the same becoming attitude she had exhibited to the gentlemen on their first entrance. There was, however, a slight alteration, which was no doubt considered to be an improvement as well as a change. In her left hand she held a pocket-handkerchief; this, it might naturally be supposed, she had been applying to her eyes, though the fine lace of which it was almost

entirely composed, and the carefully negligent way in which it had been disposed, so as to show its expensive material to the best advantage, gave it the appearance of being there much more for ornament than use.

Lady Strafford looked thoroughly resigned, though not quite able to restrain her emotion. Apparently her ladyship had as completely reconciled herself to the widow's cap as to the dispensation of Providence. She was wiping her eyes as the doctors made their re-appearance, having arranged the depth of her crape, and the cost of her jet ornaments with perfectly feminine, or rather perfectly lady-like judgment.

"I am ready to hear the worst, Sir ——," she observed, with a subdued voice, once more putting down Sherlock on Death, when the gentleman she addressed approached her, as she believed, to break as gently as possible the fatal intelligence, for which she had been several hours preparing herself.

"I am glad to hear that, Lady Strafford," was

the reply; "it indicates great strength of mind to be prepared for a heavy calamity."

Lady Strafford raised her handkerchief to her eyes.

"But there is, I think, greater strength of mind required in receiving intelligence of an expected calamity suddenly averted."

Lady Strafford seemed as if she did not quite comprehend. She withdrew the lace, and looked inquiringly into the venerable and benevolent face that was bending with so kindly an interest over her own.

"Are you as well prepared, Lady Strafford," he inquired, taking her hand, "to hear good news, as to hear bad?"

"Good news!" echoed the lady, with a genuine start of surprise. "Oh, yes, Sir ——! Indeed I am prepared. If you really think my dear husband will recover, pray tell me. I shall be very thankful."

He then stated his reasons for believing that Sir Francis's fine constitution would enable him to

sustain the serious injury he had received, with no worse effects than great debility during the few months the curative process would demand for its completion.

Lady Strafford put up her handkerchief to her eyes more than once during the statement, for real tears gushed forth; but the smiles with which they were accompanied—which were no less genuine—proved that it was not grief that had called them forth. Her thanks were very fervent, but the great man at once made her understand that by far the largest share of her obligations were due to Dr. Jukes.

At this intimation, her ladyship impulsively shook hands with that gentleman, and with a fervour which implied that his red face, rough head of hair, and other unbecoming characteristics, had faded entirely out of her mind. The demonstration took the little man so entirely by surprise, that he was evidently as much bothered as he had been by his inability to discover any trace of the pistol-bullet in his patient's wound.

Dr. Claridge began to feel himself in the background, especially when his patroness led his distinguished friend into a recess of the window, where the two conversed together in a low voice. This feeling would have been sensibly strengthened could he have heard the suggestions given to leave the case entirely to the care of the now odious Dr. Jukes.

At the end of the conference his quick eye discerned a small slip of paper pass from the lady to the gentleman, with a winning smile from the one, and a courteous acknowledgment from the other. Dr. Claridge knew it was a fifty pound note, and had scarcely exhausted his envy at seeing such a large fee so easily earned, when Sir —— began to bow his adieux.

What his feelings would have been had he known that a Bank of England note of the same amount, from the same source, was in the odious Dr. Jukes's waistcoat-pocket when he left the house—moreover that it was the precursor of a much larger sum that followed it a week or two

later, I cannot express. All I know for certain is, that the well-got-up family physician from that time forth professed to hold the oracle of English surgery in supreme contempt, and never referred to "that fellow Jukes" in terms more polite than he was likely to apply to a bear who had crushed his ribs in his embrace.

CHAPTER VIII.

" Here in the sultriest season let him rest,
Fresh is the green beneath those aged trees;
Here winds of gentlest wing will fan his breast,
From heaven itself he may inhale the breeze;
The plain is far beneath."

CHILDE HAROLD.

ON my arrival at my hotel, I found André waiting and wondering what had become of me. He seemed overjoyed when I made my appearance, and told me that he was just about to put an advertisement in the newspaper, which he showed me. It ran thus:—

" Lost, stolen, or strayed,
AN ENGLISHMAN.
Whoever will give any account of him shall receive
Five francs reward."

Five francs was actually going to be thrown away upon me by a French driver!

As I came forward to give an account of myself, I presented him with the sum at which he had estimated me, and bade him get ready for a start at once.

It was now two o'clock, but I thought we could at all events make a stage or two before dark; and although the chance of my setting out on my intended journey looked hopeless, I was actually *en route* at three o'clock. We managed to get as far as Evreux, a poor, miserable town, and drove up to the Hôtel de la Paix, a hostelry conducted on the most primitive principles.

The waiters were all young women, totally devoid of what is called waist, and their skirts did not give me the impression that they were the least likely to suffer from any of the accidents that crinoline is heir to. The length of time they kept me waiting was awful, and the breadth of their *patois* was equally so.

I was lodged in the best bedroom that the hotel

could offer, but unfortunately it was separated from the stable by such a thin partition, that I could hear a perpetual munching all night, indicative of the close proximity of horses, whilst every time they moved they seemed to threaten me with a visit. In fact, it was difficult at times to persuade myself that there were really no horses in my room, in addition to the four which were tearing along with a diligence inside a picture-frame; and I couldn't help feeling afraid that they might be taking a fancy to walk through the partition, just to look at themselves in the cheval-glass.

At a painfully early hour, too, their guardians came, calling them with a loud voice. "Eh bien! lêve toi cocotte," and "Tourne toi donc grande bête," were as audible as if the language was being addressed to myself. I must say I was extremely glad when the horses were groomed, and led away to work, for I trusted that I might then have a chance of getting to sleep.

Such was not the case. Of course the fellow who took them away forgot to shut the stable-door. Con-

sequently, as it opened on to the yard, the pigs walked into the stable, and began grunting about unpleasantly close to my bedside; then the cows looked in, and gave me the benefit of a morning bellow. And this was the Hôtel de la Paix! What a misnomer!

Didn't I bless the careless lout who was the cause of this continuation of persecution! It was, however, of no use, I was obliged to make the best of it; but when I did get up, I resolved for the future to ascertain the whereabouts of my dormitory, before I indulged any more in the treat of a best bedroom.

The curé was gone to market when I called upon him, and was not likely to be home for two hours. This was cheerful intelligence to hear, when I was anxious to start at once. I was mentally debating whether I should go away without seeing him, when I beheld the reverend man coming along the street towards me with a large basket of vegetables in his hand. He was the very finest priest I ever beheld, sleek, rosy,

round, and robust—a perfect model of a thriving curé.

It is true that Roman Catholic priests are, with few exceptions, as corpulent and plump a fraternity as one can find—perhaps this is because they have very little to do; and perhaps because they have plenty to eat; or perhaps the cause of this example looking so well, lay in the basket he carried. Anyhow he had enough peas, beans, apples, potatoes, and carrots, to provide him with vegetable diet for a week at least. It was a substantial big basketful, such as is sometimes upset upon the stage in a pantomime.

I stopped him as soon as he came close to me.

"Monsieur," said I, taking off my hat.

"Ils sont superbes n'est ce pas?" he immediately remarked, thinking of course I was addressing him about the articles he had just purchased, and that I was on my way to the market for similar provisions.

"Et très bon marché," he continued, "mais il fallait marchander, tout de même."

I explained that it was not about his vegetables I wished to talk to him, though all the time I was speaking he kept an admiring eye on his well-filled panier. I asked him, "Could he give me any information respecting an English lady who had died in France, but I knew not where."

"Je n'en ai pas entendu parler," he replied.

He evidently paid but a partial attention to what I had said, for he immediately remarked again,

"Ils sont superbes n'est ce pas, ça arrive de Bernay."

I was annoyed, and would not admire his property as he wished. He did not see the contemptuous look I gave him, as he continued contemplating his basket, and as I moved on I heard him observing to himself in the most satisfied way, "Ces pommes sont magnifiques!"

It would have been waste of time to have prolonged conversation with him. What could he know the least likely to throw any light upon the obscurity I was endeavouring to clear up? He appeared capable of having written the unsatisfactory

communications which had caused so much trouble, particularly if he had been called upon to put pen to paper on a market-day; but it was not at all likely that he would have taken so much trouble.

From Evreux we went on to Lisieux, another little town after the same style, where any travelling-carriage but the diligence was looked upon as a wonder, and the spectacle of an English gentleman journeying alone in a vehicle with two horses, would collect a crowd even on a *fête* day.

I was not the first of my nation, it appeared, who had been there of late, for on seeing me put my head out of the conveyance, the waiter (a male one), who was standing on the step of the Hôtel de France—the Clarendon of the town—exclaimed in amazement, in his own tongue, "Another Englishman!" and rushed excitedly in-doors to convey the intelligence to his master.

The latter came instantly forth to inspect and receive me, but I could not help fancying that the bow with which I was favoured, lacked somewhat of that courteous pliancy I had been accustomed

to receive in my tour through the provinces; and it struck me that there was a good deal of suspicion about the way in which he looked me over.

"Monsieur is probably an acquaintance of the other Monsieur stranger?" he remarked to me, in a half-interrogatory and by no means reassuring manner, after I had alighted, and was advancing towards him.

I replied that I knew no one travelling in the neighbourhood.

"But you are English, are you not, Monsieur?" continued the host.

I admitted the fact at once.

"Ah, you are English, and say you don't know this other stranger, who is an Englishman, too—c'est trop fort!" cried the incredulous host.

"Where is he gone?" I inquired.

"Gone!" was his reply. "He is not gone, and cannot go in the condition in which he is; he has been in bed four days."

"Is he ill, then?" I demanded.

"Oh, no, he is not ill," returned the host, shaking

his head mysteriously; "it is a very extraordinary circumstance indeed. Will you go and see him yourself, since you are a compatriot, even if you don't know him?"

I consented to do so, and being shown up-stairs, knocked at the door where I was told he was, and a loud "Come in," in unmistakeable English, was the result.

I entered, and found a young man of about two or three and twenty, who gave me the idea of being a gentleman, lying in bed. I explained that, having heard of an Englishman being confined to his room, I had come to ascertain if I could be of any use to him.

He seemed delighted to see me, and instantly thanking me sincerely, informed me that he had been compelled to remain in bed for several days, because he had no clothes.

"No clothes!" I exclaimed, "why, how, then, did you come here?"

"Oh, I'll soon tell you that," he replied. "I am going into the Foreign office, or something of that

kind, and my father proposed my travelling in France in order to learn French; but, as I had never been abroad in my life, he advertised for a courier for me, who would undertake to teach me some French, and get me a master. My father received an answer to his advertisement from a man whose appearance I liked directly I saw him. He said that he knew the continent very well, particularly France, and I looked forward to having a pleasant tour. We crossed over from Southampton to Jersey, and from there to St. Malo, whence we proceeded here in a carriage and pair. I was very tired, and went to bed early, and when I awoke, I found all my things gone; and the landlord made me understand, although I can't speak a word of French, that the other gentleman was gone away in the carriage, with all the luggage; and I have been here ever since. It is now four days ago. He took everything—coat, trousers, waistcoat, shoes and socks, and all I have left is a pocket-handkerchief, and three pence in English money, and .... the night-shirt I have

got on. What a pretty predicament to be left in!"

"Have you communicated with your friends?" I inquired.

He told me he had done so, but was not sure whether he had given the right address, and that he had only written two days before.

I calculated that in that case he could not expect to hear for some days. Letters did not then go at the pace they do now, and I recommended his writing again, and letting me see that he gave the proper address. I then advanced him some money, lent him some things to put on, and undertook to purchase others for him.

My unexpected arrival was certainly a godsend to him; and the over-prudent host was by no means of the obliging nature one would hope to find him in the event of being in such a fix.

"What made you think of taking this route?" I inquired of my new friend, whom I invited to dine with me that evening.

"Oh, the rascal I engaged as courier told me that the Boulogne and Folkestone route was so hack-

neyed by the English, and that one met so many questionable people at the former place, that he had too much regard for me to take me that way."

"And what did this rascally courier look like?" I inquired; "there are plenty of regular couriers to be found who are trustworthy men."

"Oh, he was very respectable-looking," he said, "and I may say, looked like a gentleman. He came to call on me himself, as soon as ever he found out what I was in want of. His name was D'Arcy."

"D'Arcy!" I exclaimed, with profound astonishment.

I then obtained such a description of him as left no doubt of his identity. It was the same scoundrel who had done me out of the five hundred pounds at Newmarket; the same who had extorted the hundred pounds from Lord Arlington, under the pretext that it was to procure my release from imaginary confinement at Boulogne; and who had been guilty, as I knew, of almost every roguery under the sun. I wished that I had as much leisure as

inclination to hunt the rascal down. Here was a case upon which it would not be difficult to convict him.

I related to my new acquaintance as much of the private history of the pseudo-courier as I could recollect. I need not say how astonished he was.

It seemed that the swindler had made off with upwards of one hundred pounds in money belonging to this young man, an extensive wardrobe, his passport, books, watch and chain, besides other objects of jewellery; and had himself received in advance sixty pounds for emoluments and expenses; he had offered to give references when he first presented himself for the place, but, to use my friend's own words, "I should have thought it an insult to such a gentlemanlike-looking man to doubt his respectability."

Some people are so over-confiding in appearances, and imagine that a man's reputation is always to be read in his looks; but it's a thousand to one if those who trust implicitly and solely to the judg-

ment of their own eyes, do not find out to their cost sooner or later that there are some characters which take excessively deep reading on the part of the eyes to make out. The successful forger is almost always a plausible-looking man, and by the aid of plenty of "assurance," quantities of fraudulent individuals pass current for a while in the circulation of society, it is true; but those who don't take the precaution of finding out by some means something about the man they are going to have dealings with, have really only themselves to blame if they are taken in.

I recommended a very good courier, whom I knew to be an honest man; I advised his sending at once for a passport, in lieu of the one abstracted from him; and the next morning, having given him my address at Paris, and begged him, if he should find himself in urgent need of my assistance, to write to me at the "Poste Restante, Rennes," I took leave of him, but not before I had explained his case to the host of the Hôtel de France, who, being unable to understand English, had been

obliged to content himself with his own divination on the subject.

I started from Lisieux, and proceeded on my way. After some hours drive, I arrived at Caen, a very large and populous town, containing so many churches and chapels that I was some hours engaged in making the necessary inquiries. Here I met with a great many of my countrymen, evidently residents, judging by the unexcited way in which they were strolling about. D'Arcy, of course, had taken care not to relinquish his charge at such a place as this, abounding as it was with Englishmen, some one or other of whom would have been sure to have taken steps to have him arrested, as soon as the case became known in the town; whereas at Lisieux nobody knew the rights of the story, and by the time I arrived, the scamp was probably breathing the air far away in perfect safety.

From Caen to Coutances, and from Coutances to Granville, my road lay through some of the prettiest country in the north of France. The

sketching traveller, who goes about with his drawing-materials in his pocket, might have found satisfactory employment for his time and pencil at every turn of the road, introducing him to some fresh view of undulating scenery; whilst the Norman lasses, with their simple but picturesque head-dresses, would have come in well in the foreground of the landscape.

The weather was delightful, though I might perhaps have found the sun a trifle too powerful, had not the human screen that sat before me on the box protected me effectually from its scorching rays.

From Granville, the next point I had to make was Avranches. We had just succeeded in mounting the long steep hill, on the summit of which the town is situated. I was occupied in reading a description of it in the guide-book, which I had with me, when I was interrupted by the carriage coming to a sudden standstill.

André threw down the reins, covered his face with a large red handkerchief, and without giving any notice, burst into a flood of tears.

Of course I asked what was the matter.

"Oh! it is my poor Augustine," he replied sobbing; "what shall I do? I am very miserable."

He had previously informed me that his wife whom he had lost was called Augustine. I tried to comfort him in the best way I could, telling him that he must hope she had gone to a better place.

"Oh! no, it is not her," he exclaimed, "it is the poor brown mare, whom I named after her. She is so lame I am afraid she is going upon her last journey."

Not a little surprised by this anti-climax, I promised him that I would wait at Avranches and give his beloved animal some days' rest, which would doubtless bring her round.

He seemed partially comforted, and, after getting down and examining "Augustine," and talking to her in the most affectionate way, succeeded in making her limp on at a foot's pace into the town.

I was not altogether sorry to be obliged to make a few days' stay at Avranches; it seemed a nice

little town; the environs looked extremely pretty. I should be enabled to go and visit Mont St. Michel, which was only a few miles distant, and I must say I was rather tired of proceeding ever onward, on my melancholy tour, halting as I had done only for a few hours; and when I found that the chief priest of the locality was gone away to Rennes, and would not be back for three days, and that the other priest in the town had only comè into office a week before, any regret that I might have had at the occurrence of this unavoidable delay was quite done away with.

There were charming retired walks around Avranches, leading to country châteaux, many of which were within easy distance of the town; and with their long avenues of fine trees, and prettily laid out grounds, they quite repaid me for the trouble of taking a stroll in their direction. There were many whose gardens and pleasure-grounds and tastily-constructed arbours told me that they belonged to English residents; as well as splendid rose-trees loaded with perfumed blossom of divers

colours, beds of heliotrope and verbena, lovelier than any that the goddess Flora could ever have presided over, and squares and circles of scarlet geranium of fiery redness, that would have warmed the least horticultural heart to behold.

There was also an extensive public garden close to the town, kept in the most exquisite order, adorned with shady trees, classical statues, and beautiful fountains, apparently ever striving to toss away into thin air the glassy fluid that perpetually returned. Like Sisyphus, they were condemned to a never-ending task.

It was on the day after I arrived at Avranches that I became acquainted with the charms of this lovely garden, when sitting down upon a rustic seat, with the majestic tower of Mont St. Michel, isolated amidst the waters of the ocean, in the distance below me. I was amusing myself with a book which I had just bought at the library, when two young ladies, who had come into the garden by different paths, met, and began conversing upon the lawn close behind where I was sitting.

They were evidently sisters, judging from the familiar way they talked to each other, and I concluded from their accent and language that they were Scotch. They could not see me, and were doubtless ignorant that there was any one so near them as I was when they began conversing, inasmuch as, at the back of the seat where I was sitting, there were two or three high laurels which sheltered and shaded people who chose the seat.

"Have you seen her, Ada, this morning?" said the youngest to her sister, whose name I presently heard was Blanche.

"Yes," replied Ada, "but only for an instant; she was just going to the cemetery again—it *is* so foolish of her. I always think she looks paler and more delicate after these visits."

"But does she walk all the way?" enquired Blanche.

"Oh! dear, no," returned Ada, "she can only walk very short distances still, and uses a close carriage."

"Poor thing, how I pity her," remarked Blanche;

"how anxious her father seems about her; do you think she will ever recover."

"She certainly looks dreadfully ill," replied Ada; "but you see we don't know what is really the matter with her, and what it is that she has been suffering from. All she has told us is that she has had a very bad illness, and you know one doesn't like to ask her in the delicate state she is. By the bye, shall we have time to go as far as Bandry's before luncheon?"

"Oh, yes, I daresay," said Blanche; "but what do you want to go for?"

"Oh," said Ada, "I promised her I would go to the nursery-gardens, and inquire if they had got two or three good trees of that pretty rose, 'the Madame Campbell,' of which I took her a few flowers the other day."

"What can she want them for?" demanded Blanche; "but if we are really going, we must be quick, as it is already a quarter to two."

With these words, they tripped away to execute the commission, and I had no opportunity of seeing

their faces, except in the unsatisfactory way I did; when I turned round and caught a glimpse of them through the laurel leaves, as they were going away.

I could not help feeling strangely interested in the conversation I had unintentionally overheard; though it had been so short and ambiguous, enough had reached me to make me aware that there was a lady in the town who was sorrowing as I was, for one who was no more, and in whom she took an interest. How could I help feeling deeply for her?

I determined to go the next day, and visit the Avranches cemetery—not that I expected to learn anything by so doing; I had been to so many similar places; and, after wandering from tombstone to tombstone, sacred to the memory of the departed, I always felt saddened when I wended my footsteps away from those consecrated enclosures.

I had often, too, unintentionally intruded upon the sorrow of those who were shedding tears over the graves of deceased relations and friends, and

had experienced genuine distress at such interruptions. In too many instances had I disturbed the peaceful devotions of children who were kneeling round the grave of brothers or sisters taken from them, as their parents had told them, by "le bon Dieu." I had frequently interrupted pious maidens twining the annual garland of flowers round the little cross which designated the spot where some lost loved one had been laid; and ill luck had more than once led me close to the sacred ground where some orphan was watching in sad seclusion the silent cypress growing over the grave of lamented parents.

Those who retire to the sanctity of the tomb to pour out their grief, or pray for the repose of departed spirits, love to be left solely to the imaginary presence of the dead; and I cannot say how deeply I regretted having interrupted them—nevertheless, I made up my mind to go the next day, and walk round the cemetery.

There is so much that is truly beautiful to behold in a French grave-yard. The graceful plants and

shrubs that look as if they were conscious of the fact that they stood upon holy land, and seem mournful even when they blossom. The significative *immortelles*, the humble crosses in unpretending wood-work, and the simple, but poetically-written epitaphs upon the peaceful tombstones.

When I roamed sorrowfully in search of her who had come to such an untimely end, it gave me a sort of melancholy pleasure to contemplate those touching memorials. I may also have felt, without admitting it to myself, an undefined wish to meet the mourner, to whom I had heard the young ladies in the garden allude.

CHAPTER IX.

"Thy gentle light would lead me on, my own my guiding star,
Till every sense of life were gone, e'en wert thou placed afar;
And now thou deign'st so near to shine, with rays that warm and cheer,
The surest, firmest hopes are mine, my soul is strange to fear.
Yes, thy gentle light shall lead me on, my own, my guiding star."

ROBIN HOOD.

"Poor heart! she slumbers in her silent tomb,
Let her possess in peace that narrow room."

DRYDEN.

THE next morning, at about half-past ten, I started forth in the direction of the cemetery, which, as I had been informed, lay some half an hour's walk

outside the town; and as I stood upon the top of the hill, looking down on the country below, on the side of Granville, I could plainly see it not far distant.

The tall cypresses, with their dark sombre foliage, imparting, as they do, a gloomy air to the spot over which they preside, were not to be mistaken. There they stood, like silent and solemn mourners, indicating to the world that they guarded the peaceful territory so beautifully named in the German rendering "Gotte's acker," (God's acre). Plainly could I see, also, studded over that peaceful territory, the snow-white tombstones, and the sacred ensigns of the Christian religion constructed at their feet, whilst, here and there, some grander monument stood out in bold relief among the less pretending sepulchres that surrounded these memorials of the departed.

Yet, in a few short years, I could not help soliloquising, as I gazed upon this repository of the dead, those stalwart cypresses will have become superannuated, and will decay when those who

now come to mourn over the respected tombstones of their relatives or friends shall themselves be mourned for, and their own graves be strewed with flowers by a generation at present unborn. Those cypresses, which shall then have served their time, will be regarded as only cumbering the ground. They will be plucked up by the root, and younger trees guard the cemetery in their stead.

The tombstone which to-day is spotlessly white, shall crumble into dust, the inscription written upon it shall become gradually more and more illegible, and the funereal urn graven above it by the carver's hand, mutilated by the ravages of time.

I passed through the massive iron gate that led to the cemetery, and, taking one of the side paths, read the names of the dead, inscribed on the tombstones, as I walked along. They were, naturally, almost all French. Immortelles were strewn in profusion over the graves of those who were sleeping beneath flowers, looking bright and gay—such as geraniums, china-asters, sweet-peas—blossoming on the silent tomb; and myrtles and magnolias, were

growing so large and luxuriantly, it was evident in a short time that the pruner's knife must be employed to restrain their wandering branches.

There was not the same grandeur about the memorials erected to the memory of the departed, it is true, as the lover of such sacred sights would find to his heart's content in the magnificent cemetery of Père la Chaise, in the environs of Paris. It is natural to suppose that here there was little of the architectural display which the eye of the visitor is called upon to admire in the burial-ground of the French metropolis. Neither was this cemetery so rich in the names of celebrated men, such as Abelard, Moliére, Fontaine, Talma, Kellermann, and others, as the other can boast, to say nothing of the splendid Mausoleum of Demidoff; but still the peaceful country cemetery had the sweeter charm of the two, in my eyes.

The neighbouring town of Avranches could not afford to suspend natural wreaths of camellias and other rare plants, in the depth of winter, over the

graves of her sons and daughters, in the way that Paris could; but here there was perpetual peace and quiet all around. Those who were tenanting their last dormitory could sleep on, undisturbed by sightseers from foreign lands.

I had been slowly wending my way along the narrow winding paths that led from one grave to the other, without having, as yet, crossed the wider walk that separated the ground into two divisions of square size, when I was startled by hearing footsteps proceeding up the main walk, to which, without knowing it, owing to the thick foliage by which I was surrounded, I was close. I was standing still at the moment, looking at the grave of a widow, round which ran a series of little earthworks, representing so many little children, who, as the tablet informed me, had all died of consumption, when I heard a clear, musical voice, which my ear detected immediately to be that of a young lady.

The translation of what I heard was this (for she spoke in French), "Bandry, you think these

roses will grow, and that the buds on them will come into blossom ?"

A man to whom these questions were put, and who was carrying three flowers in pots close behind her, instantly answered in the affirmative.

This was all I heard; the footsteps proceeded up the walk, becoming gradually less distinct, till their sound died away in the distance. But there was something in the tones of that clear, musical voice which ran through me like an electric shock. Yet why one voice should strike more forcibly upon me than another I could not conceive.

A sudden impulse prompted me to gain the wide walk, and observe the direction which the lady and her attendant had taken. They proceeded almost to the farther end of the cemetery, and then turned into its opposite division by one of the bye paths. I felt that I could not, with any delicacy, follow and intrude upon them; but from an interest in the lady's proceedings I could not account for, I determined to watch at a distance, and when they had retired, to go and satisfy my

curiosity as to whose grave they had been embellishing.

After waiting some time, conjecturing and speculating in the most extraordinary way, I saw the lady emerge from the surrounding shrubs and return towards me. I instantly withdrew into one of the side paths, and, from behind a small yew tree of thick foliage, scrutinised her as she passed along.

A thick veil covered her face which was inclined towards the ground. She looked neither to the right nor to the left, and seemed, as far as I could judge, buried in thought. She was not dressed in deep mourning, for although she wore a black dress and a dark shawl, she had on a violet bonnet. The gardener was not with her, and as she drew near to the end of the cemetery, where was the principal exit, she seemed to walk on somewhat quicker, and in a moment she would have been lost to my view, had I not suddenly crossed the main path and made towards the gate by a narrow walk which led in the same direction.

A close carriage was drawn up at the gate, from which a gentleman alighted the instant he saw her coming, and assisted her to get in. The carriage then drove away into the town, and she was gone.

Having thus seen the last of her, I retraced my steps, and went back to the spot where I had seen her penetrate into the recesses of the cemetery with her attendant. I had little trouble in discovering where she had been occupied when I lost sight of her, as the man had not yet completed his work, to which he was putting some final touches.

The grave he was occupied in adorning, seemed to be one of the most carefully and tastily decorated in the cemetery. There was a row of scarlet carnations in full blossom running all round the mound of earth where the body was laid. On either side stood a beautiful diminutive specimen of that prettiest of all "evergreens," the *cedrus diadora;* a little box edging had been placed all round the outside of the space allotted to the deceased, and the rose trees, which had just been planted, were

situated behind an artistic little cross, that had been erected at the foot of the grave.

Having admired, for some seconds, the taste which had been expended upon the adornment of the tomb, I suddenly observed that there was no tablet to describe its tenant.

The gardener, seeing me stop and look at his work, and having saluted me, asked if I did not think it very pretty?

Having answered his question, I addressed one or two to him—why there was no tombstone, and no description of the person whose grave was so tastily laid out?

"Well, you see," he replied, "there was a tombstone, but it did not please Mademoiselle, so she got permission from the authorities to erect another. They are making a magnificent one."

"Is it a relation of the lady I saw coming here just now?" I asked.

He did not know, he said; all he knew was, that it was an *etrangère* whom Mademoiselle took an interest in; she was determined to have the

tomb well laid out; the tombstone was to be erected to-morrow; and Mademoiselle was to be informed as soon as it was done, as she was coming to see it.

I had often seen people planting flowers and shrubs round tombs before, but had never felt much interest in the work. Yet there seemed something singularly suggestive about a row of scarlet carnations that environed the grave. There were blossoms of every sort to be met with in French cemeteries, so that there was nothing extraordinary in my thus coming across such a collection of my favourite flower. Others liked them as well as myself, and many people wore them. Still I could not help thinking it a strange coincidence; and on looking round, I suddenly perceived that I was alone. The gardener, who had performed his task, had gone away mysteriously. There was no other course open for me than to wait till the next day, when the tablet was to be erected.

It struck me, as I was strolling back from the

cemetery towards the town, though I had not thought of it before, that the person who had directed the arrangement of the tomb must be the individual alluded to by the young ladies in the garden as having gone to visit the cemetery. I rushed to the conclusion that she must be English, and from regard for her countrywoman had paid her last resting-place those womanly marks of sympathy.

Having returned to my hotel, I inquired if any English lady had died there suddenly within the last few months. The landlady was positive that no such event had occurred in any hotel or lodging in the town, or she must have heard of it.

I went out to enjoy an afternoon walk in the public garden, and took possession of the seat which I had occupied the day before. But the two sisters did not appear that day.

The next morning I woke early, and though I got up in very good time, it was of no use to think of making a journey too soon to the cemetery. A prey to anxiety, hour after hour passed wearily by.

On entering the cemetery, I met four workmen wearing white caps, wheeling along an empty truck, such as I had often seen in stonemasons' yards. With hasty steps I made my way to the tomb I had observed the day before. Several paces before I had reached the spot, I was able to discover that the stone, with a freshly-engraved tablet upon it, was there. I rushed anxiously forward, and read the following words written in English:—

"Sacred to the memory of Emily,
Wife of George Carlton,
Aged 22.
She died at the little village of Allain, not far from Avranches, and her body was interred beneath this stone.
'The Lord loveth whom he chasteneth.'"

It was not possible that I could be otherwise than most deeply affected and bitterly pained on reading these words. Melancholy reflections and self-accusations kept me to the spot. I had found the object of my long search, but the distress of mind created by the retrospect it forced upon me was so poignant, that I was unable to tear myself away till after a considerable interval.

The next thing I did was to inquire where was the village of Allain, mentioned in the inscription. I was directed to it by a peasant girl whom I met close outside of the cemetery. It was only half a league distant, and I went there at once.

On arriving, I instantly sought out the priest's abode. He was at home, and though his memory required constant refreshing, I contrived to obtain from him all the particulars I had so long sought for in vain.

He had been called in to the Hotel of the "Croix d'Or" in the village, which was nothing more than a better sort of inn, to attend a lady who was dying. She had begged him to write to her parents, and had given him their address. He said he had been at first astonished to receive no answer from the English gentleman to whom he had written, but afterwards concluded that the invalid must have been wandering in mind when she spoke to him, and that the address was incorrect.

I explained that he had omitted to attach his

address to his letter; at which he opened his eyes and mouth extremely wide, keeping them on the stretch for some seconds, and exclaimed, "Quelle sottise que j'ai fait!"

In further explanation, he observed that he so seldom wrote to any one farther off than Avranches, where he was well known, that he considered an address superfluous, which was the reason why he had made the omission in this case.

I asked him several questions respecting my wife's last moments. "Did she suffer?" "Did she seem to feel her loneliness?" "Did she mention any one by name?"

At every one he cast his head up in the air, and thought for a long time, and then gave the same unsatisfactory reply.

"Ma foi, j'oublie, mais je ne crois pas."

He was a fat, heavy man, breathing very thickly, who seemed to have wheezed away his memory of the past, for he had to hold his breath, and repeat to himself any question put to him a great many times before he could find any answer.

It will, perhaps, be unnecessary to add, that I got very little information from him; and though he seemed very civil and obliging, I could not help thinking that he was hardly the man I should have chosen to confide in, in a great emergency.

Having concluded my interview, I went to the Croix d'Or, to get what additional intelligence I could. I saw the landlady, who told me that Madame, of whom I spoke, arrived at the hotel one evening in a travelling carriage. That she had complained of being unwell, and had expressed herself unable to proceed on to Avranches. That she had gone to bed, and remained there all the next day, when the doctor was called in, who had ordered some remedies for her, which she had taken, and they seemed to have done her good; but towards midnight she had rung her bell, and begged to see a clergyman; whereupon they had sent for Monsieur le Curé, who had come at once, and, to the astonishment of every one, she died before morning.

"Oh, she was a beautiful lady!" she exclaimed,

"handsomer than any one I had ever seen, and she died in my arms like a dove, closing her eyes, and gradually drooping her head without uttering a sound, so that we did not know the exact moment when she expired. Mais je suis sûre," she added, "qu'elle dormait en paix, elle avait l'air si calme si doux, qu'il me sembla en la regardant, que la mort l'avait rèclamée, sans lui faire peur."

As she spoke she crossed herself, and whispered a short prayer for the repose of the lady's soul.

I was much affected by this recital, and warmly expressed my thanks.

She told me that all the baggage of Madame had been sent to the octroi office, at Avranches, where she trusted that I should find everything safe, as nothing had been touched.

On offering a recompense, she declared she would accept nothing, as she had only performed a duty. "La France ne temoigne que du respect aux morts, et n'attend pas des gages pour le service aux malades."

I returned to the hotel at Avranches, and wrote to Mr. Rivers a full account of my discovery.

CHAPTER X.

"Not many miles removed from the verge of this recondite region, stands a collection of houses, which its maligners call a fishing town, and its well-wishers a watering-place."
Ingoldsby Legends.

A QUIET and rather comfortable air pervaded the apartment I am now about to describe. A glance would suffice to show that it was nicely furnished; a more careful examination would have convinced the experienced eye that, though the furniture was new, it was smart rather than handsome, and far more elegant than durable. The fact is, it was cheap.

The chairs and couch were covered with Utrecht velvet, but neither were likely to stand rough

handling. The tables and sideboard shone with the very best French polish, but they were veneered, and liable to crack like old varnish on a picture; while the frames of the large mirror, and the showy engravings, and the massive cornice, were as splendid as gilding could make them; but the compo had already begun to show those divisions in the carving, created by the shrinking of the green wood in a warm temperature.

The Brussels carpet was pretty and bright, with a flower pattern that would have puzzled the botanists' knowledge of the characteristics of species, quite as much as it would have outraged the artist's notion of the harmony of colour. A gaudy rug out-flamed the carpet, and a still brighter covering on the round rose-wood table out-glowed the rug.

It is scarcely necessary to add, that the apartment thus furnished belonged to a newly-erected villa at a fashionable watering-place. No one but the builder could do justice to its architecture. He would boldly have pronounced it Italian, probably

Palladian. But, then, provincial builders who are often obliged to be their own architects under circumstances of peculiar difficulty, are infinitely more imaginative than learned. As a grocer's shop is often dignified with the title of "Italian warehouse," this English edifice might be called a Palladian villa. Here and there odds and ends of Italian decorations might have been seen, that justified the distinction assumed for it by one tradesman quite as much as did the maccaroni and olive oil sold by the other sanction his assumption.

It was, however, as inviting as fresh stucco could make it. A pretty garden, surrounded by a low wall, constructed of parti-coloured bricks, led by a bright gravel walk, relieved by clumps of geraniums, fuchsias, roses, and other favourite flowers and shrubs, to a pretty door; and a projecting window of plate glass, having in front a well-filled aquarium, and possessing that great watering-place recommendation, a fine sea-view.

From this post of observation, by means of a telescope placed in readiness on the table, the tenant

of "The Marina Villas," No. 1, might see the two or three fishing-boats, belonging to Crabbington-super-Mare, go and return,—the one steam-boat that took pleasure parties to what were pronounced, in the Guide Books, places of interest in the neighbourhood; the revenue cutter, that sometimes crossed the bay to the stations of the Coast Guard; and last, not least, in the estimation of visitors—the bathing-machines on the sands below.

No one, however, at No. 1, was now using the invaluable assistant to time-killing. Whether this arose from there being no fishing craft, steam-boat, revenue cutter, or bathers in sight, or whether these picturesque objects had been observed so often that the occupants of the villa did not think it worth their while to get up and take another look at them, most assuredly the telescope lay idle on the table; and of the two enviable possessors who paid for its use with the rest of the furniture, the lady sat quietly but diligently pursuing her crotchet in one of the Utretcht velvet arm-chairs, and the gentleman as tranquilly lay at full length,

reading a novel, on the Utrecht velvet couch.

The former was handsomely dressed in a French muslin, made most becomingly. Her only ornaments were a cameo brooch, of high artistic merit, richly set, a gold chain, and two or three sparkling rings, which very much became her taper fingers as she pursued her light and apparently agreeable work; the expression of her countenance was mild and dignified, full of self-content, and remarkable for its tranquil repose—particularly when she lifted her eyes from the points of her instruments, and sent a glance of observation in the direction of her male companion.

He was a gentleman clothed in a summer suit of light cloth, that appeared to have been made unusually loose; but the thinness of his face, and the pallor of his complexion denoted that attenuation of the frame occasioned by long bodily suffering. He must have lost flesh considerably; but though he was unquestionably an invalid, he was evidently of the class likely to benefit by the invigorating sea-breezes of Crabbington-super-Mare;

and aided by the invaluable assistance afforded by the frequent inspection of its two or three dirty fishing-boats, its one dingy steamer, its smart revenue cutter, and its shoal of female bathers, bobbing up and down in the green water, was fast approaching convalescence.

It is just possible that the book from the Circulating Library facing the Parade was becoming of as little account as the idle telescope on the table; for once or twice the gentleman yawned in a manner that was far from complimentary to the author. Yet it was written by a sensation writer —who affected a terribly dashing style, and dealt largely in the most highly wrought incidents; but when the much excited reader has got through a chapter or two, in which the only character for which he felt an atom of interest has been smashed by a railway collision, and finds himself doomed to encounter volume after volume of the most wearisome commonplace, he cannot well avoid getting more and more tired of such a narrative.

Just as the occupant of the Utrecht velvet couch

did under identically the same circumstances, he will yawn portentously two or three times, each succeeding demonstration growing longer, louder, and wider than its predecessor.

Every time this occurred, his female companion cast an observant glance towards him, but not seeing anything alarming in these symptoms, she plied her nimble fingers without betraying the slightest anxiety or apprehension. She merely thought that the book was not amusing, and waited patiently for some additional evidence of the fact. This was not long in coming.

Presently the volume fell out of the reader's hands, and a louder, longer, and wider yawn than any of its precursors, was accompanied by a strenuous stretching of the limbs, the feet and hands being thrust out as far as they could be made to go.

"Well, I do think," exclaimed the gentleman at the termination of this performance, "that the novels one gets at watering-places are, like everything else to be found there, uncommon slow."

"I thought you liked the one you selected," quietly observed the lady.

"It was readable enough at first," said the other, in something closely approaching a grumbling tone. "In my opinion it's deuced stupid of a fellow to reserve all his liveliness for his first chapter. I think he gets regularly galvanised when he begins his story, and when the shock goes off has not a bit of life left for the remainder of the three volumes."

"Shall we go to the library, and change it, my dear?"

"No, thank you. Perhaps I shouldn't be a bit better off."

"Would you like a walk on the sands, dear?"

"It's low water, and all the little brats in the place are digging as diligently as if for a wager. One can't stir a dozen steps without risking one's neck by stumbling into a hole or over a mound."

"Go a little way along the cliffs, dear?"

"One can't walk half a mile without a dozen stoppages from young ladies in picturesque posi-

tions, sketching, reading, or working, doing their little possible to look interesting, and monopolising the best points of view, and the only safe paths. Of course a gentleman cannot think of disturbing them, so he must either make a hazardous detour, or go back the way he came."

"Perhaps they would rather be disturbed."

This was said with a smile and a slight tinge of satire.

"I shouldn't wonder. If a fellow has a mind, an acquaintance of some sort becomes an easy matter; but if he doesn't care about interchanging nothings with girls fresh from the school-room, he must needs keep aloof."

"You used to admire young ladies, my dear. Indeed, I fancied I saw you looking once or twice with apparent interest on the tall girl in the pink bonnet, with those beautiful ringlets."

"Well, she isn't bad-looking."

"I think her very pretty."

"She thinks so herself, I can tell you."

"Then there's the young lady with dark hair, in

the straw hat, you know. I'm sure you liked her."

"I looked at her once or twice. But then she is always laughing and chattering with two or three girls of about her own age, as if they were amazingly facetious, and immensely appreciated each other's pleasantries. At least, they invariably did so when I was approaching them. I can't say I admire those loudly jocular girls who insist on being so monstrous funny in public."

"I am afraid you have become difficult to please, dear. Will you have a carriage, and take a drive to the ruins of Sandborough Castle?"

"To see part of a stone wall with half a window? No, thank you. I can't discover anything attractive in a tottering heap of stones, perched on the verge of a cliff."

"But it was built in the time of King John, dear, and was the stronghold of one of the most powerful Barons, who made him sign Magna Charta."

"So the guide-book says; and I am not sufficiently up in antiquities to be able to contradict such an

authority. If the Baron wished me to admire his residence he ought to have taken care that it should come down to my time in a better state of preservation."

The lady did not consider it expedient to enter into a defence of the ruins of Sandborough Castle. For a few minutes she went on with her work without attempting to renew the conversation, and the gentleman, totally disregarding the sensational novel, appeared to give himself up to what is familiarly known as a brown study.

"What are you thinking of, dear, if it's a fair question?" she asked softly, after regarding him with one of her scrutinising glances. "Perhaps I ought to have said—who are you thinking of? Is it the young lady in the pink bonnet, or in the straw hat?"

"Eh? What?"

"How absent you are, my dear! I said, are you thinking of the sentimental young lady with the bright ringlets, or the facetious one with dark, glossy hair?"

"I would not throw away a thought upon either. I was thinking of Mrs. Carlton."

The smile that was playing about Lady Strafford's handsome mouth suddenly disappeared, and she continued to ply her busy fingers with a look of reserve that did not half so much become her.

"The fact is, I should very much like to know what has happened to her."

Lady Strafford's countenance became a perceptible shade darker. It was evident that she was far from being pleased with what she had just heard.

"It would take a heavy load of anxiety off my mind if I could learn that she had returned to her husband."

Lady Strafford drew a quick breath, and the shadow began to pass away from her handsome features.

"You see I cannot help considering myself responsible for having got her into that confounded scrape; there wasn't a bit of harm in her, and I

am afraid that there wasn't much more sense. But as I was the cause of her quarrel with her husband, I should be very glad to hear that the misunderstanding had been explained, and that they were living together as comfortably as before."

Lady Strafford was well aware of the fate of her friend, and felt a fair share of womanly regret for her loss. Her feelings were exactly what ought to be considered most becoming in a person placed in the social elevation her ladyship enjoyed. She could not avoid regarding her as the cause of the dreadful injury inflicted on her husband, but her early death had removed all displeasure from her mind. She disapproved of his thinking of her with too particular an interest, but when she learnt the tendency of his thoughts, was satisfied that she had nothing to complain of. She thought it, however, most prudent to defer for the present acquainting him with the melancholy state of the case.

"Yes, it is to be hoped that Mrs. Carlton is quite happy," she replied, giving additional attention to her work, that she might not excite suspicion. "I

know that she crossed the channel to go in search of Mr. Carlton."

"She did, did she? That's all right!" exclaimed Sir Francis, as if much relieved. "Of course she found him, and I don't think Carlton could be such a brute as to resist the evidence she could afford him of her innocence."

"Mr. Carlton's a wretch!" exclaimed the devoted wife, with very becoming earnestness.

I may as well intimate, that this amiable lady held fast by this opinion for a long time, as if it was her bounden duty to hold it.

"I don't know about that," was the reply. "It is quite clear that he was the victim of a delusion, and when a man of spirit thinks that his wife has been false to him, he has no alternative but to shoot her seducer on the first favourable opportunity. I am pretty certain that I shouldn't have been a bit less savage, had I got the idea as firmly fixed in my head that you had been in love with Carlton."

"You know that there never was and never could

be the slightest cause for your having such a monstrous idea in your head," cried her ladyship, with spirit.

"Nor was there the slightest cause for Carlton's jealousy," replied her husband. "However, it will be a lesson that will keep me from offering gallant attentions to the wives of my friends. I never professed to be much of a squire of dames or damsels, and have found the honour to be too burthensome to make me desire a repetition. Nevertheless, I don't intend to entertain any ill-feeling against Carlton."

"But *I* do!" said the good wife, determinedly. "Indeed, I can't bear to hear his odious name mentioned."

"Hullo! there's a strange sail!"

Up sprung Sir Francis, with a good deal of animation for an invalid, seized the glass, and directed it over the top of the aquarium.

"I daresay it's only one of the fishing-boats," observed Lady Strafford, without lifting her eyes from her crotchet.

"Schooner rigged," exclaimed the Baronet, apparently to himself.

"Is it the Revenue cutter?" mildly inquired his lady.

"As much like the cutter as like a whale," rather rudely replied her husband, for he was a yachtsman, and a little prided himself on his nautical knowledge.

"Then it must be a collier—for I've been told that Crabbington-super-Mare can boast of at least one fresh supply of coal every month."

Sir Francis laughed, but he did not take his eye from the Dolland.

"She's rounding the point. Now she tacks. Her sails catch the breeze again. How gloriously her gallant course she goes! She walks the waters like a thing of life! By Jove! she's well handled!"

"What boat is it, dear?" exclaimed the lady, her husband's emphatic announcements having at last excited in her a fair amount of feminine curiosity. She had laid down her work, and approach-

ing the window commanding the splendid sea-view at Marina Villas, No. 1.

"Goodness gracious! it's a yacht!" she added.

"Of course it is. See if you can make her out?"

Lady Strafford took the telescope, nothing loath, and looked through it in a manner that showed she had been used to such inspections.

"I could almost swear it's the dear *Trackless*, she is so like her in build and trim."

"Nonsense," cried the baronet, gruffly; "you know the *Trackless* is lying off Cowes."

"She was lying off Cowes when we last heard of her," replied his wife. "But as I don't know what could bring her here, I suppose she is at anchor there now. She is approaching the shore. I wonder who she can be. I wonder whether her owner is on board. I daresay he is a person of distinction. You will know him of course, if he is a member of the Club?"

"Oh! he's sure to be a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron; and, I have no doubt whatever, is a particular friend of mine."

"How very nice. Perhaps he may invite us to go on board. A sail would do you so much good."

"That's just my opinion. I have long been wishing for something of the kind to enliven us both. I am so deuced tired of this place."

"They are absolutely lowering a boat, my dear," said the lady.

"You don't say so!" cried the gentleman, with at least equal interest.

"Yes, and the crew are pulling ashore."

"Just what I expected."

Lady Strafford thought that her husband took the unexpected event very tranquilly, and yet it was impossible to look at his face and fail to notice its animation; it presented so remarkable a contrast to the listless, wearied air impressed upon the features half an hour since.

"There is a gentleman in the boat!" cried Lady Strafford. "I cannot recognise him as yet, but I think I shall presently."

"I shouldn't wonder."

Lady Strafford turned a quick inquiring glance in the direction of her husband. His eyes wore an expression of sly humour that she could not quite make out, experienced though she considered herself in their interpretation.

"What could he mean?" she asked herself.

"I shouldn't be at all surprised," she added aloud, "if you knew something about this yacht coming here."

"Not at all unlikely," he replied, and a smile seemed on the point of becoming a laugh.

"Positively I never knew you so provoking. Do tell me who it is?"

"A most particular friend of yours, my dear—in short, quite a pet."

"A gentleman who is a pet of mine!" exclaimed the lady, with a look and tone in the highest degree becoming under the circumstances.

"Why don't you try and ascertain who it is?" inquired Sir Francis, restraining his mirth. "He must have landed by this time."

"So he has, I declare," she replied, after a short

survey with the glass in the direction of the pier. "And so many people are about the landing-place that I cannot distinguish him."

Lady Strafford put down the telescope as if a little, just a little, put out, and turned her back upon the sea-view.

"I daresay it's only one of your jokes," she observed.

"It must be a novelty in that line, I should think. But who is this coming towards the house?" he added.

She turned quickly round again.

"It's Doctor Jukes!" she cried, with intense surprise.

Sir Francis burst into a loud laugh.

In the midst of this very hearty peal of mirth, that excellent little man, in a rough pilot coat, in short, in an unmistakeable nautical suit, from the little glazed hat on his rough head of hair, to the waterproof overalls that enveloped his legs, presented himself to the occupants of the villa.

Lady Strafford, as soon as he had entered the sitting-room, seized both his hands with the most lively demonstrations of delight.

"Now there is some conspiracy between you two!" she exclaimed; "I am sure of it. So you had better confess."

The naval surgeon appeared striving to look more rugged than usual, as he glanced at Sir Francis; nevertheless a movement resembling a wink was perceptible in his left eye.

"You don't know anything about that yacht which has just anchored in the Bay, do you, Doctor?" asked the Baronet, trying to assume an innocent aspect.

"What should I know about yachts?" he demanded, gruffly. "A man who's sailed half his life in men-of-war, can't be expected to care for such cockle-shells."

Lady Strafford moved her scrutinising gaze from one face to the other.

"It's no use trying to deceive me, Doctor. I'm certain that you've been hatching a plot with my

husband, and I'm ashamed of you both for being so sly."

Doctor Jukes's face, for a moment, preserved its sternness, but the laugh of his patient was too hearty to be resisted.

At last Sir Francis explained that, becoming tired of the attractions of Crabbington-super-Mare, the young ladies included, he had written to his naval friend, asking if he could take charge of his yacht from Cowes, and accompany him on a short cruise to the Mediterranean. The Doctor very gladly undertook both employments, and had skilfully brought the *Trackless* into the little bay.

Lady Strafford listened to the statement with the most lively satisfaction. She knew that nothing could be more beneficial to Sir Francis than the proposed voyage, and readily undertook to get everything ready for a start within three days, at the latest. Then she left the conspirators to enjoy their little plot, while she expedited the necessary

arrangements for their quitting the Italian villa, for the pleasant cruise they had so secretly arranged.

CHAPTER XI.

"I know my path will lead me right,
With such a prize in view,
And happy omens bless my sight,
That must, that shall be true.
Yes! thy gentle light shall lead me on,
My own, my guiding star."

Robin Hood.

WITHOUT having any plan of proceeding far, I found myself the next day wending my way towards the cemetery. I cannot say why I went. Perhaps it was because in my present frame of mind I preferred wandering among the dead to loitering among the living.

I remained in the cemetery a long time, consider-

ing whether I ought to leave the grave as it was, or whether I should get permission to have the body taken up and conveyed to England. On that point, however, I determined to be entirely guided by the wishes of Mr. Rivers.

Some people think it wrong for a Protestant to be buried where there are none but Catholics; but for my own part, I was always impressed with the idea that there is a charm about a Roman Catholic cemetery, that renders it more pleasant than an English Protestant one. In the latter you are buried, a stone is erected to your memory, and you are in a very short time forgotten. In the former, the last funeral rites are performed much in the same way, but surviving relatives consider it a duty to make a pilgrimage to your grave, year after year, on your *jour de fête*, and the votive offering of natural flowers and immortelles is gracefully laid over your tomb;

> "For here the herblets of the Spring-time blow,
> To grace the silence of all-peaceful sleep."

It may be said that such honours to the dead are

superfluous; that those who once loved or esteemed you in your lifetime can do so still, when the breath is gone out of you, without decorating your tomb upon each anniversary of your birth, and that flowers are the property of the living; but I must say I have always thought that such memorials are good.

I was slowly walking down the wide walk of the cemetery, after having spent two hours or more in this solemn spot, when, just as I was about to turn into the short narrower road that leads to the exit, I perceived the same veiled lady approaching, whom I had before seen in the cemetery.

I had already made up my mind that if I saw her again, I would thank her for her kindness in consecrating the memory of my wife. On getting close enough to her, I took off my hat, and began to speak. I was astonished to see her turn away blushing, as if she feared being recognised, or as if she had received a sudden shock to the nervous system.

However my feelings of gratitude would not allow

me to beg pardon and pass on. Suddenly she turned her head. She bestowed upon me one glance, but that was enough—I knew her! The face, the form of Clara Hindley stood before me!

"Clara, my own Clara!" I exclaimed, "we meet again." I could see that the recognition was mutual.

"Have you seen . . . ?" she said, tremulously pointing in the direction where my wife was laid.

"Oh, yes," I replied; "and were I now seeing you for the last time in this world, I could not find words to thank you sufficiently for all you have done. Oh, Clara," I continued, "this has been very, very kind of you, and now that I know it is you to whom I am indebted, I cannot adequately express my feelings!"

"Come with me," she said, "so far," pointing again in the same direction. "I was unable yesterday to see the new tablet," and she coughed so dreadfully as she spoke, that she had no need to explain why.

"Clara," I replied, "I intend to be there every

morning, regardless of the weather; but I would rather not go with you. Let me accompany you as far as the little path which leads to it, and wait for you, and escort you back. You will not be offended at my wishing to be alone?"

She gave me such a look as I thus alluded to the past, that an expression of her wishes, however contrary to mine, would have changed me in an instant. I could not help fancying that a faint smile, certainly not one of displeasure, was discernible on her countenance, as she gazed at me. She said nothing. We walked together up the walk, till we came to the side path, when, asking me to wait for her, she was soon lost to my view, as she followed the labyrinthian path which led to my wife's grave.

After some little time, she returned to me, looking as if she had been weeping. I escorted her down the broad walk.

"I have a carriage waiting for me," she said, as we approached the gate, "and my father is in it. He will, I am sure, be very glad to see you."

But I told her I should prefer coming to call, if I might, and renewing his acquaintance in that way. She gave me her address, and the desired permission. I thanked her again for all she had done for me.

"I liked to do it—it gave me pleasure!" she exclaimed, "and I am so glad that you do not disapprove."

With these words, and her well-remembered smile, she shook hands with me, and in an instant was in her carriage.

I was very miserable when alone in the society of my conscience and the contemplation of my past life; whilst hurrying on in the course of my search from place to place, there was a degree of excitement to occupy me, a perpetual change of scene which more or less distracted me; but now that my search was at an end, I found my thoughts continually dwelling irresistibly upon the recollection of that awful moment, when I leant over my fallen foe, hoping against hope that he might not be dangerously hurt. In whatever light I viewed the

melancholy event, whether in reference to himself, cut off in the prime of life, as I then believed, or my own destroyed peace of mind, I could not help feeling that I had laid up a fund of sorrow and regret that would last me for a lifetime.

The day after my unexpected meeting with Clara, I went and called at her house. She was out, and I was ushered into her father's presence. I found him agreeable and glad to see me, as he gave me a most hearty welcome. He was little changed in appearance. Looking of course a trifle older, if anything, but his expression of countenance and his intelligent features were unaltered.

I had a very long conversation with him, during the former part of which I explained much to him of what had befallen me since we last met. I informed him that I had not received his letter containing news of the unexpected fortune he had come into till nearly two years after it had been written, and that I had not then had the courage to answer it. Lastly, I related the circumstances that led to the supposed fatal duel.

He had read accounts of it in the newspapers, but made no comments. Presently he spoke confidentially to me respecting his own concerns. He told me that his daughter's health had caused the greatest alarm and anxiety for a very long time; that shortly after I left Cowes, he had seen symptoms of increased weakness, and had called in the best medical advice. "I trust," he added, more earnestly, "that you will allow me to talk seriously to you about her position, and if I am led to say anything which may appear strange, you must forgive it, for she is my only daughter, and I cannot help remembering that you once saved her life."

I begged him to be under no ceremony with me, and to say anything he liked.

"Well, then," he continued, "I will; for I feel that my daughter is at present in so weak a state that a shock might be fatal to her, and if I speak too openly, or address you in such a way as my pride ought not to allow, you must remember that a parent's anxiety for an only child in her very

delicate state cannot be regarded as calculating or worldly."

I again expressed a hope that he would consider me worthy of his confidence, and not scruple to say just what he pleased.

After a few moments' thought, he began as follows: "You will perhaps wonder why you find me residing at an out-of-the-way place like Avranches. I will tell you. Some months ago, before I left England, feeling that my daughter's health was so unsatisfactory, I took the step of seeking the first medical aid. I was recommended to go abroad, and try the effect of a different climate, and see what a winter abroad would do after spending a few months in some healthy spot. Normandy being especially suggested to me, I chose Avranches. In fact, I was recommended not to go to any place of excitement, as my daughter's mind" (here he hesitated for some seconds, and seemed disinclined to proceed, but at length continued) "was in such a precarious state that it would have been hardly prudent to make choice of a place where there was

much gaiety going on, or where there were too many people."

I listened with the greatest interest. Presently my companion proceeded.

"I must, in order to explain my meaning fully, go back to the period when I so unexpectedly came into Sir Archibald's property. My daughter seemed far from well, and living in the country all the year round did not seem to agree with her. The spacious dwelling, of which I had just come into possession, though beautifully situated, was surrounded by trees, fine ancient timber trees, that, in spite of their making the house unhealthy and damp, I could not reconcile myself to cut down. Consequently I resolved to travel, a resolution I was glad to find that my dear Clara approved of. We journeyed about England, going through Devonshire and Cornwall, after which we started for the lakes. It was during a short stay that we were making at Keswick that an incident occurred which I feel some delicacy in narrating, but it is better that I should be frank with you, and I feel

sure that you will not take any advantage of what I am going to say. I hope, too, that you will accede to the request I am about to make."

I begged him to proceed, and assured him that he might rely on my respecting his wishes.

He continued. "One evening, after we had been for a long drive on a burning sunny day, visiting the beautiful cascades in the neighbourhood, my daughter, complaining of fatigue, retired to her room extremely early. I thought nothing of her doing so, although I could not help noticing during the day that she had appeared abstracted and unusually thoughtful, and I remembered that two or three times she had complained of headache. As I was passing by her door I heard her talking strangely to herself.

"Just as she had concluded, she fell violently on the floor. I rushed into the room. She was lying on the ground unconscious. I raised her. In a few moments she opened her eyes, and recognized me. Presently she said,

"'Dear father, I have seen him.'

"I explained to her that she had seen no one, suggesting that she must have been dreaming; but no, she persisted that she had seen you.

"'You know who I mean,' she continued. 'He saved my life, and told me that he loved me when I was poor and friendless, and I could not confess that I loved him, although I did love him very much. Dear father,' she added, 'I felt just now as if I were going to die, but I am better again. Perhaps I shall live a little longer.'

"There was a wild, unnatural look about her which frightened me. I rang the bell and sent for a doctor who arrived shortly after, and, having seen her, he informed me that his patient was in a very critical state, that her mind was slightly affected, and that she required great care.

"From that moment I was in constant terror of her dissolution. I could not forget that I had already had one warning, and that a second attack might be fatal. My attention and care of her was redoubled. She often talked to me of you, although she had always, till the night at Keswick, scrupu-

lously avoided the subject. Since then she has frequently asked me if I knew where you were, and other questions about you, which I parried in the best way I could, having seen the news of your marriage in the papers, but fearing to tell her, lest it should be a shock to her. I was uneasy whenever she seemed inclined to converse on ordinary subjects, as she would do when all was well; and she has on several occasions alarmed me fearfully, when I have come into the room and found her conversing with some imaginary person. I have always stopped her at once, as medical men have advised me to do.

"It was in consequence of these short aberrations that I was recommended to go abroad. Since she has been here she has really seemed better, and I hope that in course of time I shall cease to have cause for fear; but I must tell you that I have been in the greatest anxiety ever since the discovery that she made, entirely by accident, on the day of our arrival."

I begged him to explain,

"On the afternoon of our arrival at Avranches," he said, "we dined at the *table-d'hôte* of the hotel, which I would have avoided if possible, but the landlord begged me to do so, and Clara seemed to wish it. We found ourselves seated amidst a party of English, who, like ourselves, had just arrived. A young man, who evidently seemed to be living at Avranches, immediately began addressing himself to whoever would enter into conversation; and by way of catching the attention of a gentleman who was sitting close to us, asked if he had heard of the strange occurrence that had taken place the week before at a village close to Avranches. The gentleman he addressed had not heard of it; so he stated that an English lady having come there unattended, and having died, had been subsequently buried in the cemetery; adding, that nothing had been known of her, except that she was called Mrs. Carlton.

"Everybody listened to the story, and Clara was attentive to every word, and when she heard the name, I perceived that she was buried in thought.

"Directly we quitted the table and had returned to our private room, she asked me point blank if I had ever heard of your being married. I hesitated, not knowing what to say. She saw my confusion, and insisted upon knowing all I could tell her, adding, that she was prepared to hear everything with composure. I then told her what I had learnt from the newspapers.

"The next day she went to the cemetery and found your wife's grave, and on her return informed me that she had done so. I was greatly in fear that the discovery might have some effect upon her mind, but my anxiety was relieved when I ascertained that there was no cause for alarm. One day, to my astonishment, she told me that she should like to make some attractions about the tomb, and plant some flowers round it. I made no objection, and procured for her the permission to do so, thinking that the occupation, melancholy though it was, would give her something to do, and proposing in my own mind to leave Avranches, as soon as possible after the work which

she had taken in hand was accomplished.

"She had made the acquaintance of two very nice Scotch young ladies, residing here for their education; they come frequently to see her, and she goes to see them at their château outside the town, and I was begining to hope that I should be able to carry out my plan of leaving Avranches next week, when suddenly Clara came in yesterday very much excited, and startled me with the intelligence that she had seen you and that you were coming to call. She is now gone to see her two friends, and will doubtless be back presently."

Here Sir Mark paused—for we must give him his real title—but I could see that in his anxiety on account of his daughter, he was suffering more than he could have told me, if he had time. Knowing, as the reader does, what had always been, and what my feelings still were regarding Miss Wilmer, it would be absurd for me to deny that my heart throbbed with the most intense emotion as I listened to his narrative.

I knew not what reply to make; I was at a loss

what course I should pursue that would be consistent with duty and propriety under the circumstances.

Suddenly the door opened, and Clara herself entered.

In a moment I forgot everything save that I was in her presence. I immediately rose to greet her. The smile that she bestowed on me as I touched her hand, still under the influence, as I was, of what I had just heard, was too much for me. Oblivious of the fact that her father was in the room, I held that hand in mine, unable to relax my hold.

"Clara, dearest Clara!" I exclaimed, "this time we meet to part no more; this time you must not, you cannot reject my prayer; I have never, never ceased to love you."

She made no reply, but her trembling hand which I held was the indicator of an agitated heart.

In an instant my arm was round her waist; I was regardless of a parent's presence, I was callous to every thought in the one glorious, exulting sen-

sation as I felt the gentle pressure of her beautiful head upon my shoulder.

Sir Mark, intensely affected, seemingly overpowered by conflicting emotions, remained with his face buried between his hands. Suddenly he rose, exclaiming, with the deepest sigh, "I cannot bear the idea of being parted from her; but for her sake there is nothing that I would not do."

Clara, who up to this moment had been more or less unconscious, on hearing her parent's last words, disentangled herself from my grasp.

"Father, dear," she said, "I could not bear to leave you—you to whom I owe so much; it would be unpardonable."

"But you shall not be separated from him," I exclaimed. "Clara, dear, you love me—I know you love me. I will be your protector, and watch over you with all the tenderness that in your delicate state you require. You know how very much I like and respect your father; I feel sure that he does not dislike me. Oh, Clara, do not imagine that I could take you from him."

She seemed at a loss what to say, and what to do. With those lovely eyes fixed alternately on me and her father, at one moment looking as if she would leave all and follow me, and the next as if she would cling to him and him only, it seemed as if the knotty point was far from a decision.

At length Sir Mark spoke.

"My dear child, don't think of me. I will decide for you. Let your hand be given where I have reason to believe your heart is. It would be too painful for me to say good-bye to you under the feeling that you were going to be carried away from me for ever, and that I should never see you again; but such I do not believe will be the case. I cannot stipulate that you should always be with me, but I feel assured Mr. Carlton would not wish to deprive a parent of ever again seeing his child. You know, darling, that you are dearer to me than life itself. I am never so happy as when alone with you, and when I see you in good health and spirits; but in a few years I shall be called away

from this world, and you will then be left alone, with no one to protect you."

These words seemed to have a visible effect upon Clara, for those soft eyes looked smilingly upon me. Alas! it was but for a moment. Suddenly she burst out into passionate weeping.

I was quickly at her side, anxious to know the cause of her sorrow.

"Oh, no!" she sobbed, slowly and with reluctance. "You don't love me as you used to do. You can't love me; it is wicked of you to say you love me, whilst . . . *she* is lying so near, and when you forgot me and married *her*."

"Clara," I replied, "perhaps it has not been delicate of me to have thought of marrying so shortly after discovering my late wife's tomb; but you must remember that you were my early love. You must bear in mind, too, that you would not allow me to hope even that our union could be ever possible; but I didn't forget you, in spite of my having married. Oh! Clara, you know not what misery you

will entail upon me if you now again refuse to be mine. Clara, the last time you refused to marry me, highminded and noble as it was of you to do so, you made me perfectly reckless as to what became of me, and now you taunt me with having married another. If you knew all the circumstances of that marriage, you could not think that I had forgotten you."

She continued sobbing, and relentless, as far as I could judge.

"Clara," I cried with increased earnestness, "all I ask of you now is this. Your father has mentioned to me that you are about to journey South and pass the winter. For many months I shall not see you—I shall feel it a duty that I owe to my lost wife not to see you; but if you ever loved me, if your feelings for me have not been a mere empty shadow, let us part with this understanding, that you are free as myself, but that if my constancy to you has stood the test of some months' absence, as I feel sure it will, you will then no longer refuse what I ask. I don't propose

taking you away from your father. Knowing the history of your family as I do, it would be unfeeling of me to think of such a thing; but, Clara, there is now no impediment to our marriage as there was heretofore. You know I love you for yourself, and not for your possessions. Clara, do not let us part for ever. It is cruel to taunt me with expressing affection for you at this moment. Wrong though it may be of me, remember it is only in consequence of meeting you again, and having my old feelings revived so unexpectedly. Oh! Clara, Clara, I am sure you must listen to what I say. Even now I fancy that the 'Smile of forgiveness is stealing over your beautiful face.'"

I was right. Clara had forgiven me, her eyes again beamed upon me affectionately. This time we understood each other.

Sir Mark saw that I was sincere, and knew so well what his daughter's feelings really were, that I am sure he was glad at heart, though I doubt if he could have made up his mind to part with her.

The Wilmers remained a fortnight at Avranches after this eventful day. The important question had been completely settled before the expiration of that period. It was agreed that they were to proceed to Nice to pass the winter; that I was to go to England and see my family, and break to them the intelligence of my intended marriage; then return and join them in the beginning of spring; and we also agreed that after spending a short honeymoon in Switzerland or the Tyrol, or some place that might suggest itself as more suitable, Sir Mark should join us, and henceforth we would live together.

I liked him more and more as my acquaintance with him increased. I found him such an agreeable companion, and so very much cleverer even than I had imagined. In days gone by he had had poverty to contend with, besides having not yet got over the loss of his wife, and consequently much of his talent had not shone forth. As for my love for Clara, it did not admit of an increase. Every day, it is true, I thought her more lovely than the

preceding one, and every day discovered to me some new charm; but my love could not gather fresh powers on this account, for I had always regarded her as perfection.

No differences had arisen between us. In fact, on the contrary, she had taken an immense deal of interest in having my wife's grave properly attended to, and insisted on going herself occasionally to visit it. Her health seemed to improve wonderfully, and her father assured me, greatly to my satisfaction, that he had not felt so comfortable about her for a very long time.

At length the day arrived when I was to be separated from my beloved Clara. The parting was a trying moment, and when I saw an unmistakable tear in her eye, I could not help wishing that this separation was not going to take place at all. However, I had all confidence in her, and she trusted implicitly to my constancy.

As she kissed her hand to me for the last time, ere their carriage drove off, I begged her to write

very, very soon. Then came the final "Good-bye, George," and "Good-bye, Clara," and in an instant she was gone.

CHAPTER XII.

"And thou wilt then be mine, my beautiful.
How fondly will we love through life together,
And wander heart-linked through the busy world,
Like birds in Eastern story."

The Falcon.

At length I arrived safely in England. I say "at length," because from Avranches *via* St. Malo is a tedious journey, necessitating a stoppage at Jersey, and thence a long sea-passage awaited me to Southampton.

My father gave me a hearty welcome. I found him visibly aged, but then I had not seen him for a considerable time. I had a great deal to talk to him about, and many explanations to make, and a

variety of things to be told before I had the courage to inform him that I was again already engaged to be married.

I was relieved to find that he pitied my misfortunes more than he blamed my errors. My mother hoped that my second wife would come and settle down quietly in the country, and take an interest in the poultry, and the poor people, &c., and would prefer the spring flowers in the green lanes, to spending the merry month of May in Mayfair, listening to the "nightingales" in an opera box, instead of in a neighbouring wood.

I told her that nothing would give me greater pleasure than to live an arcadian life, and that my intended Clara "luce refulgens" could never cease to charm and fascinate me.

I passed some weeks in the country, receiving satisfactory and affectionate letters from the South of France. I am not going to inflict upon the reader our correspondence, interesting though it was. My letters to her can easily be imagined. I wrote a great deal about my feelings, my love, my

constancy, and similar things, that ought never to be made public except under the compulsion of the Divorce Court; and her letters to me it would be a still more dreadful breach of confidence to divulge.

Neither am I going to relate the history of my life during the months we were separated, because nothing happened worth recording.

I was much grieved to receive no answer from Mr. Rivers after I had written to confirm the statement he had so strangely received from the French priest. I wrote to him again on my arrival in England, telling him that everything had been done that was in my power, and that if he should wish to go over to Avranches, and see his daughter's grave, I would willingly act as his courier, and conduct him to the spot where she was buried. To this letter, like the former one, I received no answer.

One day, on entering the room where my father sat, I found him reading a letter edged with ominously deep black. He handed it to me. It

was from Mrs. Rivers, to inform him that her husband was no more, and had appointed him sole trustee of her jointure. The communication was extremely short.

'Mr. Rivers, she said, had never recovered from the first shock occasioned by the news of his daughter's death, and that the receipt of the letter I had written to him from Avranches had affected him so severely, that he had been seized with a paralytic stroke, from which he never entirely rallied.

My father was very much shocked. Mr. Rivers was one of his oldest friends, one of the good old sort, who would have done anything in his power to prove the sincerity of his friendship; and, as such, his loss was irreparable.

I also felt deeply distressed, for I could not avoid a sense of responsibility. No doubt I had helped to shorten his useful life.

By his death I came into a large fortune and a beautiful estate; but I did not feel disposed to take possession, so acute were my feelings of regret for his loss.

I was looking forward to a happy issue out of all my troubles.

The winter at length passed away; it was a very dreary time, because, in spite of my receiving, as I did, every week, letters from my darling Clara, I only became more anxious to be with her.

Sir Mark wrote me very satisfactory accounts of her health, so that I had nothing to make me really uneasy. Indeed I was in the enjoyment of more tranquillity of mind than I had ever known before.

Correspondence, however, with the object of one's affection is but a poor substitute for her presence. I became more and more impatient, and at last could endure the suspense no longer.

I started for Nice, and thought the journey longer and more tiresome than any other I had ever made. In my impatience it seemed as if it would never come to an end.

From the moment I set out I went on without stopping night or day. From London to Paris, thence through Melun, Dijon, Lyons, Grenoble, Digne, at which latter place I found, to

my inexpressible annoyance, that the diligence in which I had been travelling thus far, proceeded to Marseilles; and as I thought I could get to Nice quicker by the direct route, I determined to hire a carriage and go on post-haste.

The hotel at which the diligence stopped, "Le petit Paris," was a large rambling place, where a long time elapsed before I could get anyone to pay attention to my wants. Having had a hasty meal, I sent to order a carriage to be got ready to convey me to Nice. Presently the waiter returned with the pleasing intelligence that there were no horses in, all having gone to take people to a village *fête* some miles distant.

"No horses!" I exclaimed; "but I can't stay here. I must have some horses."

"If Monsieur must have them," replied the waiter, "I will go and say so."

He returned again after a few minutes, with his master's compliments, to say that there was only one quadruped in the town, and that that one would not go in harness. It was an old cavalry horse, that

kicked everything to pieces that was put behind it, having been once wounded in an artillery waggon which it had never forgotten; and, added the waiter, it is not even over-safe to ride, as it stumbles a good deal.

I considered what was best to be done under the circumstances. Unfortunately, the diligence which was bound for Marseilles had already left, otherwise I might have proceeded by it so far, and thence by water to Nice.

After thinking some time that anything was better than remaining stationary, when I was so anxious to get to my journey's end, I determined to ride the cavalry horse, let him be what he might, and have my things sent on the morrow. In a few minutes I was informed that he was at the door. I went immediately to inspect him.

He was not by any means an ugly-looking horse, although his forelegs had a suspicious appearance, and stood almost as close to his hind ones as those of a giraffe. He had several scars about his quarters and frame, which he had re-

ceived "in action," moreover he laid his ears back and showed the white of his eyes in a way that gave me a decided impression that he had a "bit of a temper."

I asked of the lout of a boy who brought him to the door, if he was vicious.

"Oh! no," he replied, "he is as quiet as a lamb."

Who ever yet was told, on asking a similar question, that a horse *was* vicious? Every brute under the sun that is in the habit of kicking, or rearing, or running away, or even killing every other person who mounts it, is called as "quiet as a lamb," "as gentle as a babe," and you are assured that "you might ride him with a packthread;" but it is an astonishing thing what quantities of these quiet lambs and babies find their way into the market, and get disposed of, simply of course because their owner has no further use for them.

"Ho! ho! Zephyr," cried the boy to the horse, patting him, and at the same time carefully watch-

ing his eye, as if he wouldn't trust him farther than he could see him.

"What is he used for?" I inquired.

"Oh! he carries the doctor round the neighbourhood," replied the boy; "but the gentleman has not got a good seat on horseback, so that he walks wherever he can do the distance on foot.

Zephyr certainly did not look the sort of horse for anyone to ride, I thought, as I mounted him.

"He is lame!" I holloed out, as he limped on every leg that he moved.

"Oh! that's nothing," shouted the boy; "you will find he will go capitally presently."

It was, however, very painful work for some time. He went as badly as *le diable boiteux* ever could have gone; when he had got off the stones, and into the country, his action mended a little; and when he got thoroughly warm, he really went tolerably well, trotting along quite briskly.

I had a long journey before me, and calculated that I should be four or five hours doing it, so I

determined to nurse him as well as I could. It was now three o'clock, and it would be dark before I arrived in sight of the town; and the road not being very good, or very direct, I had to trust a great deal to chance for going right.

Luckily I had to traverse a very pretty country, a tract of land perfectly alpine in appearance. Mountains on all sides, vast precipices and deep ravines, and the route I had to take was little known to English travellers, but well deserving their examination.

After riding about two hours, I passed through the little picturesque town of Castellane, that of Grasse being the next point I had to make. I was already within two or three miles of the latter place, allowing my quadruped to proceed at a foot's pace, and having got on very good terms with him; for although he had several times tried his utmost to rid himself of me, now by way of a little variety trying to rush through a thick hedge, and then running backwards into a ditch, still I had managed to restrain his vagaries, and he had already found

out that he had someone more expert than his medical master to contend with.

He was marching along very quietly upon a piece of green of some extent upon the roadside, when he and I were suddenly startled by a man vaulting up on to his back behind me. Before I had time to look round, the fellow was holding on firm to the collar of my coat with one hand, whilst with the other he brandished an ugly-looking stiletto most menacingly in all directions.

"Now then, my bourgeois," he exclaimed, "en avant! en avant! as fast as possible. We are pursued! For heaven's sake away, or we shall be overtaken!"

So saying, without giving me time to make any resistance or observation, he gave Zephyr a terrible stab with his stiletto on the quarters, whereupon the ancient war horse started off as hard as he could go, kicking up behind most vigorously, and dropping his head to a level with his knees.

Away he flew, regardless of the efforts I made to stop him, the demon behind sticking to my

collar like a gigantic leech, and exciting the animal forward by using to him the most threatening language, every now and then giving him a fresh touch of the stiletto, on which occasions up went his heels into the air, almost jerking me and my companion from the saddle, and temporarily throwing the whole of his weight and ours upon his tottering fore legs.

"We are pursued! we are pursued!" he kept exclaiming, almost throttling me by his rude grasp.

I tried to speak, and was about naturally to launch forth into some indignant language, but I could not proceed, the brute behind was all but choking me, and no wonder, as the whole of his weight was attached to my collar; and as I was at the same time pulling at the horse like grim death, feeling that until I had checked him, I had little chance of getting rid of the ruffian that had so strangely taken me by surprise. Besides, his stiletto frightened me.

Again he cried—"We are pursued!—faster,

faster!" and again the stiletto was applied to the horse's quarters. The infuriated animal lashed out more mischievously than before. His fore legs suddenly gave way under the exertion, and he turned a complete summersault, I and my unwelcome companion being precipitated over his head.

I hardly had time to get up and disentangle myself from this man, who wrestled with me like a maniac, before three or four villagers, armed with pitchforks, were upon us.

"Here they are!" they exclaimed; "we have got them!"

They surrounded us, holding their pitchforks most menacingly before them.

"Ah, les brigands," they shouted, "surrender, or we will kill you on the spot!"

I instantly let them see that I meditated no resistance, feeling sure that I was not the individual they were in search of, and rejoiced in my own mind that the ruffian who had insisted on riding *en croupe* behind me was at length overtaken.

However, they seized us both in the most unceremonious way.

I attempted to explain to them what had occurred, but instead of listening and doing me justice, as I expected, they gave me pretty clearly to understand that I had better hold my tongue, and follow them peaceably. They led us to a farm-house by the wood-side some hundred yards in my rear, where, as nearly as I could guess, I had been sprung upon by my assailant. We were secured hand and foot, and each shut up in a separate stable, outside which two or three strong peasants most valiantly stood on guard.

By this time a crowd had assembled. All the neighbouring farmers and their wives and daughters had arrived, attracted by the shouts of the peasants; and every now and then the door of the stable in which I was confined was cautiously opened, in order that some fresh comer might be indulged with a peep at me.

One exclaimed, as he saw me—"He is a Spaniard;" another expressed his opinion that I

was a Neapolitan; whilst an old soldier with one leg most positively declared that I was a Cossack, adding that he was not sure he had not seen me before. He was looked upon as an oracle, for he had been all through the great Russian campaign under Napoleon.

Several times I protested loudly, when my door was opened, assuring my captors that they must be labouring under some mistake, and begging them to explain why I had been thus arrested. All the answer I got was, that I should soon see when the gensdarmes arrived.

At length, four or five of those important personages made their appearance. Three of them having ascertained that my hands were tied, boldly came and conducted me through the crowd into the best room of the farm-house hard by. I was searched diligently, and submitted to a severe interrogation as to where I came from, and where I was going, and what business I had in the neighbourhood; but I had my passport, which ought to have protected me, and so it would, only that it was

in English, and none of them could understand a word of it. However, I managed to explain it to them after some trouble, and was at length told I was free.

And why had I ever been captured? Simply because the ruffian, who had sprung upon my horse and fixed himself on to me, had been found secreted in the granary with another accomplice, waiting till it was dark, when they intended to rob the house. On being discovered, they had bolted, one across the fields, and the other down the road. I was passing at the time, and, thinking it a fine opportunity of escaping, the first had jumped up behind me. It seemed that they were two desperate brigands, who had for a long time infested the neighbourhood, and robbed the farmers.

Poor Zephyr had been caught by some of the peasants, who regarded him, as being the property of a brigand, almost with as much terror as the supposed bandit who rode him. He was given up to me, and I was allowed to proceed on my journey, not, however, without some of the peasants feeling

that it was a sin to allow me to escape, believing that I had only got away because I had bribed the gensdarmes. I then proceeded without any more adventures befalling me, and Zephyr went as well as could be expected after his fall.

My arrival at Nice had of course been very much retarded by my apprehension and detention, so that it was too late to present myself at the Wilmers' that evening. However, I found out where they lived, and walking out at an hour when all Nice had gone to rest, I had the satisfaction of gazing on the abode where my beloved Clara resided.

The next morning, when I had the pleasure of seeing her well in person, I felt that I was indeed rewarded for my disagreeable journey, and all my troubles. Never had I yet seen her so beautiful. The good effect of wintering abroad was plainly perceptible. The melancholy pallor, which had pained whilst it interested me, in the days when I first knew her, had entirely disappeared.

Her complexion now appeared a perfect combi-

nation of health and beauty. It was still somewhat pale—not the outward sign of sorrow or sickness, but that soft, delicate hue, peculiar to many of my fair young countrywomen—and charmingly diffused over it was a beautiful pink tint.

I could not help being struck with this, it was so decided an improvement, and one I had not dared to hope for, considering how short a time it was since I had seen her weak and delicate-looking. There was something else I noticed, which gave me infinitely more satisfaction—this was the joyous look that beamed over her features as I entered the room. I could see that my arrival was a pleasant surprise to her.

I had travelled with so much haste, that although she knew the day on which I was going to leave England, still she did not expect me, or believe it hardly possible that I could get to Nice so soon.

Sir Mark, too, whom I already looked upon with the respect due to a father-in-law, seemed very glad to see me.

I cannot express how overjoyed I was to be once

more with her whom I had so long loved, and how happy I felt now that the time of my probation was at an end, and that I could talk unrestrainedly about my feelings, and confess my love; whilst never, till this Elysian moment of my life, had I ventured to feel certain that she could really become mine.

Her looks, her smiles, her general manner towards me, revealed that I was far from indifferent to her; and what was formerly but a sweet dream, which my heart at times loved to indulge in, became a glorious certainty.

When I was absent from her I was a prey to the usual apprehensions of anxious lovers. Now all trouble, fear, and uncertainty were over.

We used to walk about and drive, in short, pass all the hours together that were possible. There was no mamma to be hunting us up when we were left alone, and Sir Mark was the model of a good-natured parent.

Much to the disgust of a speculative gentleman of the Macduff kind, who had come all the way

from England with the object of getting an introduction to "The Belle of Nice," as Clara had been regarded from the moment she set foot in the town, it very soon got rumoured abroad that I was going to marry her.

Nice is by no means an exception to the general rule of country towns. Other people's business is paid attention to there in the same zealous way as elsewhere. Several of "the last winter visitors," which included many English, had not yet gone, and as they, of course, knew everyone in the place, I was quickly spied out as a new arrival, and once to be seen arm-in-arm with the beautiful heiress (for people had already, by some means or another, found out that she was one), was foundation enough for them to construct a marriage story upon, only a few hours after I had the pleasure of walking alone with my Clara for the first time. The "story" was complete in every detail, and all that remained for us to do was to fix upon the day.

I am happy to say that, in reality, we had little

else to do. No scene took place between us, no misunderstandings, nothing occurred that could be called a difference, from the moment that we met till the happy day when all was settled.

We resolved to be married as quietly as possible. Not that I much cared, but it was Clara's wish that it should be so. As far as I was concerned, I felt that I did not mind how many people assembled to see me appropriate so valuable a prize.

No difficulties arose in drawing up the settlements, nor was much time required for their arrangement. This was not because there was nothing to settle, for I was now a very rich man, and Sir Mark was also able to give his daughter a large dowry; so that our pecuniary prospects were most satisfactory. We had really more than we wanted.

The evening previous to the day when Clara was to become mine, I dined with her and her father at their lovely little villa, which was situated just outside of the town. After dinner Clara and I went out

together into the garden, and with my arm round her waist we walked up and down a scented avenue, composed of orange and citron trees, blending their fragrant blossom and luxuriant foliage with that of "the lover's myrtle and the poet's bay." We were discoursing lovingly upon the one sweet theme, and were gladly building picturesque castles in the air, which we intended to inhabit.

Suddenly Clara stopped, and looking thoughtfully at me exclaimed, in a sad tone, "George, are you sure that you have made your peace with her on the precincts of whose grave we met? Do you think that if she looked down from above and saw you about to break the last link that bound you to her, that she would pardon you?"

"Clara," I replied, "I have mourned her, and I have suffered much for her. I feel that I am forgiven. My conscience has ceased to upbraid me, and who knows but that now at this moment, if the dead do really see what happens here below, she may be pouring down her blessings upon you.

dear Clara, who so disinterestedly adorned her tomb."

At this moment she fell weeping into my arms.

"If I thought," she said, as soon as she could find words, "that she consented to our marriage, I should be more happy than I am. Yet I *am* happy, dear George, very, very happy, only I sometimes think that it is wrong of me to be the means of your forgetting her, for she must have loved you—yes, even if she only felt for you half what I feel."

Here she began sobbing again. I could not help being touched by what she said, nor could I restrain my emotion.

"Clara, dear," I said, as I smoothed down her hair with my hand, "these tears have been the last tribute that we should pay to her memory. There has been a melancholy pleasure in shedding them. Henceforth you must not weep any more for one who has forsaken 'Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.'"

She promised me that she would not do so.

"Do you feel equal to travelling to-morrow?" I asked her; for we had decided on going to pass our honeymoon on the lake of Geneva, and had taken a château in the neighbourhood of Lausanne for two months.

I was glad to hear her reply that she hoped she should be able, and that she looked forward with intense pleasure to making the acquaintance of that beautiful lake with me.

We conversed for a long time upon the future that was before us, forgetful how time was passing; that it was almost dark, when her father's voice calling to us made us immediately re-enter the house.

We were married the next day at the English Church, which, in spite of the strict privacy we had intended, we found full of people. The gentlemen of the congregation, of course, all wishing they were me, and the ladies envying Clara, her matchless beauty, even if they envied her nothing else.

We arrived quite safely at Lausanne. After a

few days I hired a very pretty and comfortable gondola, in which we explored together all the nooks and corners of the beautiful blue-watered lake, visiting those spots immortalised by Byron, Rousseau, and others—such as Vevay, "Clarens! sweet Clarens! birthplace of deep Love," whose "air is the young breath of passionate thought."

On another occasion we made a voyage to Chillon. Here I took Clara to see the dungeon, and the much visited spot, "worn as if the cold pavement were a sod," by François de Bonnivard.

I cannot say how many happy hours I wiled away on the "Clear, placid Leman!" Not that I did anything like proper homage to the grand scenery around me. I had no thought, no eyes but for Clara, whom I loved with a love that it would be overtaxing the power of any pen to describe. She was no ordinary beauty.

"Round her she made an atmosphere of life;
The very air seemed lighter from her eyes,
They were so soft and beautiful, and rife
With all we can imagine of the skies."

CHAPTER XIII.

" In one hour
I have uprooted all my former life,
And outlived everything, except thy heart,
The pure, the good, the gentle."

The Doge of Venice.

It will probably be remembered that, in the course of this story, several personages, more or less important, have been severally brought forward. Each has preserved his or her course; but that course has not been run out, therefore something remains to be said about them.

In the first place, I must explain the cause of the "sudden transformation" of Mark Hindley into Sir Mark Wilmer. In a former chapter I have stated that Sir Archibald had, in

early life, formed one of the dissipated friends of the Prince Regent, and was not exempt from the vices of that day. When residing at Brighton, he became acquainted with a girl then at a ladies' seminary at Lewes, who, captivated with the appearance of the dashing young baronet, fancied herself deeply in love An elopement was proposed, and Maria Annersley, then in her seventeenth year, quitted school on pretence of visiting a sick relative in Scotland, but with the avowed intention of becoming Lady Wilmer.

A clandestine marriage was the result, and, having satisfied her parents that she was legally the wife of Sir Archibald, she consented for a time to keep the secret of her marriage. In giving birth to her first-born child, named after her father Mark, she died, and, from a false sense of pride as well as from a fear of disgrace—for one of her relatives had been transported for forgery—Sir Archibald kept his marriage a secret from all but a confidential friend. Mark was brought up as his adopted son, and, but for the accident that caused

the death of his half-brother, would possibly have been kept out of his title and estate. This circumstance preyed upon Sir Archibald's mind, and produced a feverish state of body, which ended fatally.

The documents were so conclusive of the marriage with Maria Annersley, that a distant relation who had threatened to dispute the title withdrew his claim, and Sir Mark was finally established in the succession.

The *Trackless* was again at her old anchorage at Cowes; and her owner, much improved by his cruise, was residing in the island.

Lady Strafford, as soon as she learnt that I had returned to England, took extraordinary pains to keep her husband as far away from me as possible. Though Dr. Jukes considered him convalescent, his health, in her opinion, was far from being re-established; and whether she feared the excitement of meeting me might be injurious to him, or apprehended another duel, I cannot say. All I know is, that she did everything in her power to prevent our meeting.

While she knew that I was in London, Lady Strafford detained her husband in the Isle of Wight. Directly I left town for a sojourn in that county, he was hurried to the highlands. And when the *Morning Post* announced that I was going to the north, Lady Strafford was on her way to town, notwithstanding that the season was over, and not a person she cared to visit was to be found there.

All these well-meant proceedings were in vain. I retained too lively a sense of my precipitancy to entertain any but the most kindly feelings towards my late antagonist; and it so happened that I had an opportunity of testifying these sentiments in a manner that as much gratified Sir Francis, as it tranquillized her ladyship. I was able to render him an important service in an affair both had equally at heart, and no two families henceforth could exist in more amicable terms than mine and his.

Lord Arlington has settled down in life most composedly with a very charming wife. His contemporaries look upon him as a lucky fellow, each

wishing he was in his place. He was not indebted to Macduff for the prize; it was the result of his own enterprise, and his own merits. The happy pair have been married long enough for some couples to have got quite tired of each other; but such is by no means the case with them.

If you go to the opera, any night during the season, you may see them murmuring soft nothings, with their heads so close that their smiles seem to meet each other half-way.

He introduced me to his wife one day, and asked me to visit them at his country house. I excused myself for the present, expressing a hope that I might avail myself of his invitation when Mrs. Carlton could accompany me.

"Ah!" he exclaimed earnestly, "there is nothing like matrimony. When we were at Cambridge, we used to go to Newmarket and indulge in all the extravagances of youth, and after that we rushed headlong into innumerable follies. But let people say what they like against the married state, it is far better than gambling, or horse-

racing, or pigeon-shooting, or anything else. It is not so exciting, 'tis true, but then it is far from being so expensive. In the pursuit of the favourite on the turf, one goes to some ring man at Tattersall's and lays out a lot of money, for which one gets no return; whilst to secure the other, one goes to some jeweller in Bond Street and purchases a circle of gold, and a domestic treasure is certain."

I could not help being amused at my friend's naive remarks, drawn from his own experience; but Lord Arlington deserved a good wife.

The once restless and excitable Rosie Acton, when she ran away from the Maison Tivoli at Homburg, at the time when so many aspirants to her hand were fretting for her, is, according to late accounts, as quiet and tractable as a pet lamb. Not one of those unfortunate young men whom she gave up when she married, has taken her loss much to heart; nor has a single shot been fired at her liege lord by any of the rejected.

The heroine of a hundred conquests is content

with her laurels. Not that she forgets, as she revisits spots once familiar to her, the different heart victories associated with them. Instead of trying to add to the list of her adorers, her time is sufficiently occupied by a fast-increasing circle of much more exacting claimants on her affection.

Miss Middleton succeeded in getting her tractable mamma safely into Egypt, and safely home again; but it was a singularly unfortunate journey. The weather was bad. The Middletons picked up no eligible fellow-travellers on the road, and came to the conclusion, on their return, that they might just as well have staid at home. It was a cruel thing on the part of this enterprising young lady to drag her mother so far away from her native land, when the chances were all in favour of her never returning. Marvellous to relate, however, although they were in Egypt at a season of the year when, from the exhalations from the soil after the inundation, it is particularly unhealthy, and ophthalmia and other diseases are prevalent, the elder lady did return home quite well.

Miss Middleton accomplished the ascent of the great pyramid, accompanied by two Arabs. She has written a long account of the feat in her diary, not omitting to mention how the man who conducted her clapped her on the back, patted her head and kissed her hands when they reached the summit. They applauded her efforts most heartily, and even pressed her to attempt pyramid No. 2; but as there would be so much muscular exertion required, judging from the accounts of those who had already made that perilous ascent, she wisely decided not to undertake it.

But she was determined to know a great deal about Egyptian architecture, so that when she talked on the subject she might make people wonder more and more how one young lady's head could carry all she knew. In spite of the unsuccessfulness of this tour, its heroine, nothing daunted, took care to organize another for the ensuing spring. For a long time it was undecided where to go. So many routes had been tried in vain, so many tours had proved fruitless. At last she

decided to give the old Bernese overland another trial. It had been within an ace of producing a happy result once before, a second time it might be more successful. So she hurried the unwilling matron again into a railroad carriage, then into a steamboat, and then back again into the wagon, never stopping on the journey till she had driven up with her in triumph, and a Swiss bus, to the door of the Hôtel de la Couronne at Berne. From Berne they proceeded in due course to Thun, thence to Interlachen, and Lauterbrumen, over the Wengern Alp to Grindelwald.

Why did not such an enterprising lady go straight off to Hungary, or the Holy Land, or visit the ruins of Carthage, or anywhere more fashionable and romantic? the reader may ask. The fact is, she longed to be once more amongst Young England, in gaudy flannel shirts, with alpenstocks and mountain staffs, with chamois-horned handles, in their hands. Her heart was with the venturesome voyager with a sunburnt countenance, knapsack on his back, and an "ex-

celsior" air about his general appearance; besides, Swiss scenery one never gets tired of, and an English girl, however unattractive and uninteresting she may be in a flat country, must be plain, indeed, if she can't command some notice when she gets a certain height above the level of the sea.

Now the Faulkhorn was a mountain which Miss Middleton had already ascended the last time she was in the Oberland; it is a nice easy mountain for ladies to get up, and one which her mamma could comfortably reach the top of, by the aid of a *chaise à porteurs*, so she determined not to be dissuaded by the weatherwise guides, who prophesied a fall before sunset. She had a very good reason for deciding on carrying out her project, and was very well aware of what she was about. In fact, she would just as soon be snowed up for a month on the summit of the mountain as not, for she knew that a certain gentleman whom she had her eye on, had gone up only half an hour before, and if she was destined to be de-

tained at the top by bad weather, she would have a desirable companion.

The guides were right. Hardly had half of the ascent been performed, before a cold misty rain began to fall. However, there were only two hours' more walking required before the summit would be reached; and on they went. Presently the misty rain began to assume the form of sleet. Down it came faster and thicker. The guides looked as if they did not half fancy it, and the sound of a distant avalanche, falling and crashing its way through the pine-trees, anything but reassured them.

Before the inn on the mountain top was gained, snow began to fall in great flakes, big enough to frighten a Cossack; consequently Mrs. Middleton arrived at her journey's end, closely resembling Professor Pepper's ghost. Her adventurous daughter's bonnet was bridal white with snow. Altogether she looked like a new edition of "La Dame Blanche."

The host of the elevated inn met them with an affectionate greeting, chuckling with joy to see

two additions to the number of his guests, knowing full well, from the look of the elements, that they would be compelled to stay with him some time, and that he should be able to ask famine or war prices for everything he furnished them with.

He had already got a pretty good collection of guests. The house, it is true, was not more than half full, but then he could make more out of them, by charging dear for everything, than he could for double their number in ordinary weather.

Miss Middleton took three bed-rooms at once for herself and mother, intending to convert one into a sitting-room, for regular sitting-rooms were very scarce in the hotel, the common run of visitors being almost always lodgers for the night, and nothing more.

The next morning, the whole mountain including the surrounding chain was covered with deep snow; and snow still continued to fall so thickly, that, as far as the eye could pierce, the prospect looked very much like what ancient tradition, according to Herodotus, described the air of Scythia,

namely, "full of feathers, which prevented your seeing any farther." But the enterprising young lady did not care, so long as she could gain her object.

She went down with her mother to breakfast in the public room at a time when all the company were collected.

"What a bore this snow is," exclaimed one Englishman to another, as he looked out of the window, and yawned, and wondered how he should ever catch up the rest of his party, whom he had promised to meet that evening at Interlachen. He might wonder as much as he pleased, he couldn't get there. His guide had refused to make the descent in such weather. Didn't he wish he might be caught attempting it.

"How long do you think we shall be obliged to remain here before it will be prudent to descend?" inquired a pale-faced English curate, of a loquacious American, who was "hand and glove" with everybody he met after two or three minutes' acquaintance.

"Well, sir, I reckon we must make up our minds to stay here a fortnight or more," he replied.

"A fortnight!" exclaimed the clerical traveller, looking both surprised and alarmed. "Why, it's as much as my curacy's worth. I have promised to return to my parish next Sunday week and perform service. I must be back before then."

"Well, sir, I'll bet you fifty dollars you aint," returned the Yankee.

The curate refused to speculate on the matter.

"We must amuse these ladies," continued the Yankee, "in the best way we can," raising his voice so as to be heard by everyone. "I think we had better do as we did when we came from New York to Liverpool. We set up a lottery; each person drew a ticket, on which was a different day of the month, and the holder of the one which contained the date of the day when we arrived, won the prize. There are just twenty of us here, we may make an excellent lottery, and the person who holds the lucky day of the month

when we can descend the mountain will be of course the winner."

The proposal was instantly seconded by another speculating member of the party, and everyone was willing to take a ticket. Miss Middleton, amongst the number. The prize however she hoped to draw was of a very different nature. It was at this moment quietly eating its breakfast at a small table standing in a corner of the room ; in the person of a soft, sheepish, sawny-looking gentleman of about thirty-five, who spoke through his nose, and with a decided drawl.

He was very fond of arguments and discussions, and always had had a weakness for superior women who had travelled and were well read; liked those who had opinions of their own on deep subjects, whether they understood them or not; and he had always despised and disregarded the generality of young ladies of his time, whose conversation he considered trivial and uninteresting.

Miss Middleton was, to his idea, far superior to most of her sex, and though he had met her a great

many times of late, he never dreamt for a moment that she was hunting him down.

"How do you do, Mr. Newman?" exclaimed that young lady, approaching his isolated table. "What an extraordinary thing it is that we should meet again so soon?

Mr. Newman agreed with her that it was an extraordinary thing, and they conversed together on the strength of this mutual understanding for a good half hour, when his fair companion hinted to him that she and her mother had a private sitting-room, and that they should be very glad indeed to see him.

The gentleman expressed his thanks, and promised that he would pay them a visit. He kept his word.

The American was right. The snow refused to thaw for many days, and people were put to their wits end to keep themselves amused, for they were really worse off than on board a ship, where at least there is every now and then a vessel to be seen in the distance, or the excitement of an inci-

dental storm to break the monotony of a sea voyage.

Every morning Miss Middleton renewed her invitation to Mr. Newton, and every day the latter took advantage of it. In fact, he spent more than half his time with her; each day fancying that he liked her better—till the enterprising young lady on one ocoasion, after a long interview, having drawn his attention to the length of time the snow had lasted, he so far forgot what he was about as to blunder out that it would be a pleasure to be snowed up with her for a life-time.

She was down upon him in an instant.

"What did you mean?" she demanded, without giving him a chance.

He was obliged to explain. The result was, that in a few minutes he was engaged to her.

He said something about first of all going home and announcing his tntended marriage to his relations, but Miss Middleton wasn't going to permit that, if she could possibly help it. She had already lost one man in that way.

"How nice it would be," she suggested "to marry in Switzerland."

He was obliged to yield.

She never lost sight of him, and as soon as ever it became possible to descend the mountain, they did so together. The marriage took place a few days later, much to poor Mrs. Middleton's relief; for she felt that her travelling days were nearly over, and had made a resolution, during that fortnight in the snow, that never would she go up another mountain as long as she lived.

Poor old soul, she had such a violent attack of rheumatism, the result of that wretched ascent, that she never thoroughly recovered from it. However, she returned home safely, and her interesting daughter took her Faulkhorn husband over the Alps into Italy.

D'Arcy, after a long course of rascality, returned to England in a complete disguise and under a feigned name. But he could not afford to be idle. He commenced his tricks, and had tolerable success till his confidence in his own dexterity carried him

beyond the bounds of prudence. A grand swindle was traced home to him. He was tried, convicted, and transported, and, when last heard of, was residing at Norfolk Island, at the convict establishment then existing in that portion of the Antipodes.

André le Normand was excessively sorry to hear that I required his services no more after I had found my first wife's grave. He ventured to express a hope that if ever I had any more such journeys to make, I would employ him. I promised that I would, and he returned to Paris.

Macduff is still a bachelor. With all the wonderful information he has had at his disposal, he has never succeeded in catching a wealthy bride. However, his "Heiress List," carefully revised, as a "pocket companion," is now just coming out, for private circulation; it will doubtless prove as useful a little book in its way as "Bradshaw."

Having stayed our appointed time on the banks of the lake of Geneva, we were joined by Sir Mark, and went to pass the winter in the sweet

South. We remained several months in that country, so poetically described as "Italie, empire du soleil, maitresse du monde, berceau des lettres," returned to England and made Sir Mark's home our head-quarters.

I am supremely happy. Clara sheds no more tears, her mind is perfectly sound, and her husband's love has not abated.

The termination of the first twelvemonths of our marriage was marked by an event no less important than the birth of a little girl, who was christened Clara, and doubtless, when her features are more developed, will some day rival the beauty of her mother.

The hero of the story has turned over such a thoroughly new leaf, and come out so conspicuously as a reformed character, that no one can entertain any misgivings as to his ever going any more astray.

THE END.

LONDON: PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 July, 2018